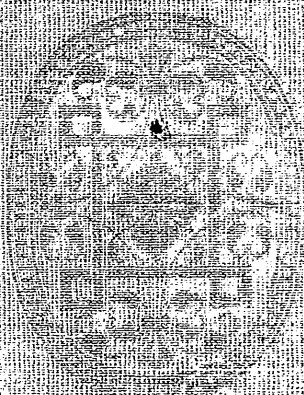


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P R E F A C E.

VERY little need be said, by way of preface, respecting the Sermons contained in this volume. The author has only to state, that they have been published at the request of various friends. To those friends he now presents them, in the same plainness and simplicity with which they were delivered from the pulpit.

May Almighty God, who alone can “give the increase,” vouchsafe “the dew of his blessing,” and render the perusal of them subservient to His glory, in the edification, comfort, and salvation of the readers.

Bath,
August, 1849.



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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

REV. xxii. 16.

“The bright and morning star.”

IN reading the various messages sent by our Lord to the churches, through his apostle John, we cannot but be struck with the manner in which he is pleased to confirm the truth, and to establish the importance of them, by appending, as it were, some of those *titles* by which his person,

character, and offices are designated. For instance, "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh among the seven golden candlesticks,"—"These things saith he that is the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive,"—"These things saith he that hath the sharp sword with two edges."—This mode of enforcing the precepts and admonitions which St. John was to deliver, is not confined to the seven churches of Asia, but pervades the whole of this book. And we find in the last chapter of it, among other titles, the beautiful and significant one which I have just read as my text. While, then, we thankfully receive it as an assurance of the truth and certainty of all the blessed things contained in the book of Revelation, let us examine a little into the meaning of this emblem, as applied to our Lord,—and applied, you will observe, by himself:—"I am the bright and morning star."

When the Saviour is represented to us as

a "star," we conceive it to signify his shining to us in such a manner as to give us the blessed pledge and assurance of the enjoyment of the full glories of the approaching heavenly and eternal "day." Bright and illustrious will those glories be, when heaven shall open its portals, and all the happy souls of the redeemed be admitted there! O, how surpassing all that we can now conceive, because "we see through a glass darkly!" But till that glorious day arrives, let us rejoice that we have a "Star," to guide us, and that it is a "bright star," yea, "*the* bright and morning star."

There is a distinction which we must make between other stars, and the particular star in our text. The ministers of the church are called "stars" in the hand of the exalted Saviour: "He holdeth the seven stars in his right hand;" and "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever." Again, all the people of God are considered as

“stars,” in some sense, because in their holy lives they shine to the glory of God here below ; and they are to shine, in different degrees of glory, in the world above. St. Paul alludes to this when he says, “One star differeth from another star in glory ; so also is the resurrection of the dead.” Besides this, we have in the book of Job a beautiful passage, wherein Jehovah speaks to the patriarch concerning the laying of the foundations of the earth, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” In that passage, the term “morning stars,” cannot mean any of those shining orbs which adorn the firmament, but those creatures who are spoken of afterwards as “sons of God ;” they must be the *angels*.

It is remarkable that one of the earliest prophecies, relating to our Lord’s coming in the flesh, spoke of him as “a star.” So far back as the period when Balaam was employed by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people of Is-

rael, we find this declared. The unwilling prophet was constrained to turn his intended curse into a positive blessing; and, in doing so, he declared that "a star should come out of Jacob, and a sceptre should arise out of Israel, that would smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." By the former term, the "star," the Messiah's *glory and lustre* were doubtless intended; and by the "sceptre," his divine *power and authority*. It has been supposed that this prophecy of Balaam, (who was one of the children of the east,) being preserved by a tradition of that country, gave occasion to the "wise men," (who were also of the east,) to conclude that the birth of Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of it, because of the unusual star which was seen over the land of Judea, and accordingly they inquired for "him that was born *king* of the Jews;" and gave this as their reason for doing so, "We have seen his *star* in the east;" thus connecting his glory as Messiah, with his authority as king.

His own designation, however, in the text is "the *morning star*;" and this will afford us an opportunity of taking a view of his character as *introducing* the glorious light of his gospel into our dark world, and into the dark hearts of those who dwell therein. I said *introducing* the light; for it is the office of the *morning star*, not only to shine as other stars do, but to *usher in the day*.

Let us contemplate, then, the rising of this "bright morning star," when, at his incarnation, Jesus "brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel." *Prophecies* had foretold his coming, and many a *type* and *emblem* of him had given hope that in due time he would come. But still, from age to age, "darkness was covering the earth, and gross darkness the people." The faithful were looking out for his coming, expecting it, and longing for it; and among the most ardent for the sight of that blessed one, was the aged and holy Simeon. What his expectations must have been, and what his longing de-

sire to behold him, we can hardly conceive ; but how watchful must that old servant of God have been, and how prayerful too ! for “ it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” Every morning must it have engaged his longing eyes to look out for some intimation of the fulfilment of the promise to him ; and his ears must have been hearkening continually, till the happy moment should arrive when the “ glad tidings of great joy” should be brought to him, that “ there was born in the city of David a Saviour which was Christ the Lord.” At length the day arrived,—the day known to the eternal Father, and appointed by him, from the beginning ; the day which was to fulfil not only the promise made to Simeon, but those promises which had been made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hundreds of years before ; and those prophecies which not only Balaam had uttered, but a goodly company of holy men, who had “ spoken

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That day came at last,—that long-expected day. God remembered his covenant with his church and people, and his covenant with his well-beloved Son, who was their *surety*: God remembered it with as much unerring accuracy as he did the day when he had determined to deliver his people Israel from their bondage; of which it is said, "It came to pass *the self-same day*, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, by their armies." So says the Apostle Paul respecting this still greater deliverance, "We were *in bondage* under the elements of the world. But *when the fulness of the time was come* God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." With the morning of that day appeared the "star,"—that star which was the distinctive emblem of the holy Jesus; called *his* star, because miraculously pointing him

out to all who “waited for the consolation of Israel;” the star that Balaam had spoken of in his unwilling prophecy, as connected with the birth of the Saviour. The wise men of the East catch the rays of that glorious luminary, and prepare to go and worship the new-born king: “It went before them, till it stood over the place where the young child was.” They fall down and worship him, as the shepherds had done before. The aged Simeon has had his heart’s desire gratified, and his prayer answered, and more than answered; for he has not only “*seen* the Lord’s Christ,” but has “taken him up in his arms;” and in the joy of his full heart, overflowing with gratitude and love, he cries out, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a *light* to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the *glory* of thy people Israel.” Thus rose “the brightmorn-
ing star” upon the dark world which was

“lying in wickedness.” What the blessings were which its shining communicated, the whole history of the church and of the world have been constantly testifying ever since; and, comprehensive and continuous as it has been, it may be all summed up in the beautiful language of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied,—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; to give the knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the *day-spring* from on high hath visited us,—the “day-spring,” or the “day-star,” or “bright *morning* star,”—to give light to them that sit in darkness, and

in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace." Any one who examines this short but comprehensive description of the blessings resulting to a lost world from the shining forth of this "bright morning-star," will see, the more he examines it, how worthy it is of the Holy Ghost who dictated it. It will show such an one how he may behold the Saviour's glory, "as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" how he may contemplate the Lord Jesus, as *suited* to us sinners in our present state, and while he beholds his Redeemer manifesting his purity and excellency through the condescension of his *manhood*, he will mark the distinction which I have endeavoured to draw between the mild radiance of the "morning star," and the dazzling effulgence of the "sun of righteousness."

Carry on this view of Christ, and from what his coming in the flesh has already done, look forward, and contemplate what, in the counsels of Jehovah, it is destined

yet to effect. This "morning star" is to introduce a *still brighter day* than any we have yet seen. Not all the blessings poured out upon the ordinances of grace, nor all the spiritual influence communicated by the preached word, nor all the answers of pardoning mercy vouchsafed to prayer, in this *our* day, can be for a moment compared to what the Church of Christ is warranted to expect, when the time appointed shall come, according to God's word of prophecy. It will not be then the shining of the light of Christ upon his church as the shining of the "Morning Star," but as "the sun in his strength." It will then be *meridian day*. Yea, to use the figurative language of prophecy, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days." I say, the light which we enjoy now, blessed and precious as it is, is but an *earnest* of that brighter light which shall shine far and wide upon all the nations of the earth;

and it bears only such a proportion to it as the "morning star" does to the "mid-day sun." The church expects this greater light of "the Sun of Righteousness," and prays for it, and longs for it, just as those of old, who "waited for the consolation of Israel," expected and prayed for the rising of the "morning star," when Christ was born in Bethlehem. And is there not a cause? Yes, for then the Lord will remove the veil from the eyes of his ancient people, and their hearts will be turned to Christ as their Messiah. They will "look on him whom they pierced, and mourn;" and they shall "fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." *Then*, too, the Spirit of the Lord shall be poured out upon the *Gentiles*, and the idolatrous nations of the earth, having cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, will confess that "The Lord he is the God." May the Lord hasten it in his time! Surely the time cannot now be far distant. Every great event which takes place among the nations of the earth, is now of such a cha-

racter as to tell us, with a voice which cannot be misunderstood, that "The Lord is *at hand*." "Behold, I come *quickly*."

But there is another point to be considered, and it is one of the utmost importance; without the consideration of it, our subject would be comparatively profitless. It is indispensable to *salvation*, that this "morning star" should rise upon the church, not only in its *collective* capacity, but *individually*: in other words, it must rise in the *hearts* of its members.

There is a beautiful passage in the second Epistle of *St. Peter*, in which he alludes to this: he calls it "the day dawning, and the day-star arising in the heart." We can hardly conceive words more forcible, by which to express the first spiritual perception of the things which concern the salvation of the soul. All whose hearts have experienced this blessed illumination, know how great is the darkness of the heart in its natural state; and how inexpressibly glorious the change is, which, by the grace of God, the introduction of

this light effects. None but such can know it; for those only who have been brought out of a dark place into a light one, can judge rightly of either. It is the prodigious *contrast* that brings the necessary conviction to the mind. We may suppose that the Egyptians, who had been sitting for three days in darkness so great that it is called “a darkness that might be *felt*,” would have new ideas of the value of the light, when God permitted it to beam once more upon them. And Saul of Tarsus, when he had been deprived of sight, would learn to esteem with peculiar gratitude the light which came upon him, when the scales had fallen from his eyes. Still more would Bartimeus, whose eyes had never seen the day, rejoice and be glad when Jesus stopped on his journey, and commanded the poor blind man to be called to him, and then opened his eyes to see him who is “the true light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” So it is, when the same Jesus shines, as “the morning-star,” upon the heart of the

sinner. And I conceive that the apostle Paul described the condition of every heart in a state of nature, as well as every heart in a state of grace, when he wrote those memorable words, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined *in our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Here we have the state of darkness depicted, before the "rising of the day-star," and the state of light which that "rising" occasions. And what is this all-important change, but the *renewing* of the heart, the turning of it from the love of sin to the love of holiness, from the power of Satan to God? O, how powerful the energy that brings this change about! How indispensable the grace that brings the poor sinner under its benign influence! How awful the condition of the soul till that influence is felt! The possession of it is the qualification for the kingdom of heaven; and the destitution of it is the preparative for eternal misery.

Search and try yourselves; prove your-

selves, whether ye be in the faith ; whether this change from nature to grace, from darkness to light, has passed upon you. O, may it be said of all who hear me, “ Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” “ *This* is the condemnation,” says St. John, “ that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” And you, beloved, who have, through grace, been made the happy partakers of this blessing, let me urge upon you the necessity of not only *walking* in the light, but of *reflecting* it. “ Remember,” says an old writer, “ that the Holy Ghost must shine upon your Christian graces, or you will never be able to see them ; and your good works must shine upon your faith, or your neighbours will not be able to see *that*.”

This is *reflecting* the light of the “ day-star.” We know that there are some things which, however strongly the light may shine on them, never *reflect* its beams. The walls of your house, for instance, will

not. But let the light shine on the diamond, and see what rays of sparkling beauty it emits. Just so the believer, who has the grace of the Spirit in his heart,—when he who is “the light of life,” shines on him, then beams of celestial holiness are reflected by him on the world around.

May it be so with ourselves! And while we are struggling to do this, amidst the various hindrances and obstacles which are continually in our way, we may encourage ourselves with the blessed promises of help and grace from our divine Lord and master himself. One of those promises contains the very words of our text; and a more “exceeding great and precious” one he never made to any of his tried and faithful servants. He says, in his message to the church in Thyatira, “To him that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, I will give *the morning star*.”

Now, this is a promise not only assuring the believing soul, that the earnest of the Spirit, as introductory to the felicity of

heaven, shall be graciously communicated to him ; but that Jesus will give *himself*, with all his attributes and perfections, to such a soul, to be his *indwelling God*. What more could the Saviour promise, what more could he give, than his own blessed and eternal *self* ; thus constituting his penitent and believing servant what the apostle Paul terms “ a habitation of God through the Spirit.”—“ I will give him the morning star.” And if the “ morning star” be thus given to him even *now*, while in this world of sin and sorrow ; if even *here* he may “ dwell in Christ, and Christ in him, be one with Christ, and Christ with him ;” then with what peace and inward comfort may he wait until the time appointed shall come, when the glories of the Redeemer and his salvation shall be finally and fully disclosed ; when the light of the “ morning star” shall give place to the heavenly splendour of the “ Sun of Righteousness ;” and when those words of blissful promise shall be fulfilled to him, “ thy sun shall no

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more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

SERMON II.

THE CHARACTER AND PRAYER
OF JABEZ.

1 CHRON. iv. 10.

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast; and that thine hand might be with me; and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.”

THOSE who have diligently read the word of God, and made it their constant study, have observed, that in those chapters which seem to promise little edification there is frequently discovered a portion of the most valuable and instructive *doctrine* or *precept*; and they have been unexpectedly refreshed and com-

forted by it. This will be found true of the passage which I have just read. It occurs among the accounts given of the *genealogies* of the various tribes of Israel, accounts which, however useful and necessary to the student of divinity, may be supposed uninteresting to the *devotional* reader of the Bible. Here is a passage, however, which seems to say, "Beware of letting *any* part of God's word remain unexamined; for, by so doing, you may lose some of the greatest blessings which the sacred volume has to bestow." In the midst of these "genealogies" stand forth the character and the prayer of Jabez,—a man never mentioned in any other part of the Bible, and spoken of here in two verses only; but mentioned in such a manner as to make us desirous of imitating his example, and adopting his prayer.

It is said, "he was more honourable than his brethren." This word must be taken, I think, as having its interpretation in the *prayer* which follows. We see

what honour God puts on his *praying* people.

In whatever sphere of life we may be called to move, there should be this "honour that cometh from God" resting upon us, as a rich blessing; because among all the distinctions by which any man can be made eminent, this "honour" which distinguished Jabez is the highest, the noblest, and the best, viz., a man of *piety* and of *prayer*. May this enviable distinction be ours! Amidst the genealogies of men on earth, may ours be conspicuous for holiness, and faith, and a life of sincere devotedness to God! and then we shall enjoy the comfort of knowing that we are enrolled in "the book of life," as citizens of "the new Jerusalem;" and that "our names are written in heaven."

Jabez "called on the name of the God of *Israel*," and perhaps there is intimated by that expression not only the pre-eminence of the "name" of *Jehovah* above all the names of the heathen deities, as objects of the worship of their deluded

votaries, but also the earnest, fervent, and spiritual way in which he offered up his supplication. To "call on the Lord" includes every act of divine worship; it denotes *faith* in him and *love* towards him; and these two things are essential to all acceptable worship. Now, it is not improbable, that at the time when Jabez thus prayed, there might have been some grievous *defection* on the part of Israel prevailing; and that his prayer is thus described, in order to point out the intrepid boldness and holy consistency of his character, "calling upon the God of *Israel*," when "his brethren" were bowing down to *stocks* and *stones*, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" and if so, how truly "honourable" does his character appear! how conspicuous his piety! because to acknowledge "the God of Israel" thus openly, and to pray to him thus fervently, must have subjected Jabez to much scorn and hatred, and possibly to persecution also. Thus we see that God honours those who honour him.

The prayer of Jabez divides itself into four parts. We will briefly remark upon it, in the order in which they stand.

1st. "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!"—In this short but pious petition we have the intense feeling of a spiritual mind. He shews how entirely all his happiness depended on that one word "bless," and what he meant by using it. What are those blessings by the possession of which a man may be said to be "blessed *indeed*?" You may remember that on a certain occasion our Saviour said, "If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free *indeed*;" by which he intimated to those descendants of Abraham to whom he was speaking, that, however they might boast of their freedom in a *temporal* sense, it was needful to have a *spiritual* freedom, which only the Son of God could give; and that until they had *that*, they could have no freedom from the guilt and dominion of sin, nor from the bondage and tyranny of Satan, nor from the condemnation of the law, nor from God's wrath and

everlasting damnation. What they needed was, to be “free *indeed*.” So in the text, Jabez asks for a distinguishing blessing, and one which would “bless him *indeed*.” And what blessing is it which, when compared with all other blessings, stands out as superior to them, and far excelling them,—something without which all other blessings are of no avail, and are as nothing? It is not, it cannot be, of a *temporal* nature. A man may have many such, and all of them tending to make him happy, as regards “the life that *now* is :” he may be “a rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day ;” and yet God may convince him, after the full enjoyment of all these things for many years, that he has not been “blest *indeed*.” The “blessing *indeed*” must be something that will *outlast* all the perishing things of this world ; and it must be something that will render a man *independent* of the things of this world, as long as he is in it ; so that if deprived of these temporal enjoyments

which are commonly called “blessings,” he can find what is better than all, and what nothing can take from him. What, then, is this “blessing *indeed*?” It is *the grace of God in the heart of man*. It is *this* which communicates to him the pardon of sin, the renewal of his mind, the justification of his person, the sanctification of his affections, and the salvation of his soul. It is the application of the blood of Christ for the washing away of all transgressions ; it is the operation of the Holy Ghost, causing the believer to walk in the way of holiness, and to show forth the praise of his God, not only with his lips, but with his life ; and thus it is a blessing which enables him to call the eternal God his heavenly Father, as being reconciled to him through the surety of the everlasting covenant. Oh what a blessing, then, is this ! Have I appreciated it too highly in saying what I have respecting it ? The carnally-minded, and the self-righteous, and the inconsiderate will, it is true, think but little of it,—at least while worldly en-

joyments stand in their way, soliciting the preference. But let a man once "taste" this blessing, and from that moment all other things become insipid. Seek it, and ask for it, if you have it not; pray for it, as Jabez did, with earnestness and faith; and say, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me *indeed!*" And remember that our text declares, "God *granted* him that which he requested." That declaration respecting Jabez is God's promise respecting you. It embodies those words of mercy, "Ask, and it shall be given you." And when our Lord says further, "*Every one* that asketh receiveth," Jabez seems to give his own *personal* testimony to the truth of those words, and to say, "I myself asked the greatest of all blessings, and God granted me that which I requested."

The second portion of his prayer is a petition for *temporal* blessings. And here I wish to call your attention to the manner in which the first part of his prayer is made to sanctify the rest. He thinks first of his soul, and intreats God first for that;

knowing that if he enjoys the “blessing *indeed*,” he may have all other minor mercies sanctified to his use. He “seeks *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and he knows that *then* “all other things will be added unto him.” He is entitled, therefore, to *ask* for them, in submission to God’s will, and to *enjoy* them, in dependence on God’s blessing. He says, therefore, in his second petition, “That thou wouldest enlarge my coast.”

In any difficulty or perplexity, the believer is authorised and enjoined to “cast all his care upon God;” and the reason why he should do so is beautifully set forth by St. Peter, who says, “For He careth for you.” If *all* “care” may be cast upon God, then the temporal things which constitute our “cares” may be cast upon Him, as well as the spiritual; and the little things, as well as the great; and the things of this world, as well as the things of the next. I think we may infer from this petition in the prayer of Jabez, that he had not been able to obtain possession of that

portion which was allotted to him, in the division of the land among the tribes of Israel; and might not have had a sufficiency for himself and those dependent upon him. If the case was so, how beautiful is this trait of character in Jabez,—seeking a competence from *God*, instead of proceeding to violent means for the possession of more than he had. There is no spirit of covetousness in this petition,—no avarice,—no oppression of others to enrich himself,—no encroaching on his neighbour's portion, in order to “enlarge his own coast,”—no grasping after more than he was lawfully entitled to,—no “adding house to house, and field to field,” for the purpose of self-aggrandisement. Those who will be rich at any rate, are not persons who carry their concerns to God in prayer, as Jabez did; and that is the reason why they “fall into temptation, and into foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” If, then, we have occasion to solicit for “the enlargement of our coasts,”—that is, for the

increase of our worldly substance, here is a pattern for us to imitate. There can be no doubt that circumstances may arise to justify our asking for temporal things, for this petition shows it; but the *manner* in which the petition is put up for them is of great importance: I mean as regards submission to the divine will; and with respect also to moderation as to the amount, the quantity, or the extent of the things asked for, and the sanctifying of the very prayer itself with that which asks for the “blessing *indeed*.” If the petition of Jabez had not been thus *submissive*, thus *moderate*, and thus *sanctified*, it would never have been recorded, as we find it here, that “God *granted* him that which he requested.”

3rd. The next clause of the prayer is a petition for present *support* and *help* from God: “That thine hand might be with me.” By “the hand of God,” I conceive we are to understand the mighty power of God. And when that “hand” is said to be “with” any one, it implies the protection

and support which God graciously affords them. When Jabez prays, "that thine hand may be with me," he shows how sensible he was of his own weakness and insufficiency. He seems to say, "What am I, if left to myself? Nothing but utter helplessness." This conviction drives him to the strong for strength, to God himself, as it did David, when he said, "In *The Lord* put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird to the mountain? *The Lord* is my light and my salvation: whom then shall I fear? *The Lord* is the strength of my life: of whom then shall I be afraid?" Thus Jabez sought safety in the God of his salvation; and so must we, if we would be indeed free from the enemies that are so bent on our destruction. Beware of self-confidence, self sufficiency, and the awful delusion that in your own strength you can contend with those enemies that "war against the soul." There is an infallible test by which to try yourselves in this particular. It was that which David

used : “ By this I know that thou favour-est me, that mine enemy doth not get an advantage over me.” He did not conclude that his enemy gained no advantage over him, because of any power of his own; but because the favour of God was with him, and the “hand” of God was with him. And it is a “joy unspeakable” that the believer has, when he can discover that his great enemy Satan makes no successful advances on him; and that his own lusts and passions, and the corruptions of his own heart, are kept down, brought under control, and “into subjection to the obedience of Christ.” By this he knows that he is under the divine protection, and a partaker of the divine favour; in fact, that God has heard his prayer, as he heard that of Jabez, and has “granted him that which he requested.”

4th. We come now to the last petition in this prayer: “Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.”—“From *evil*!” “Evil” may be viewed in two ways. There is the “evil” of *sin*, and the “evil” of

suffering ; and we need the divine help to be preserved from either. How comprehensive then is this petition ! It resembles that which our Lord has taught us, "Deliver us from evil." It includes all the forms and modes in which sin can become pernicious, and all the kinds and degrees of pain which are brought upon us by the commission of sin. But mark, I pray you, a distinction here, which is of vital importance. Jabez prays to be kept from the "evil" of sin, that it may not "grieve" him.

What is to be gathered from this ? Why that a real believer is a man who feels grief and sorrow at the commission of sin. It "grieves" him that he should ever offend his God and Saviour, by acting contrary to his allegiance, and giving way to temptation, and forgetting his vows, his duties and his privileges. It occasions bitterness to him in his very heart, and "the remembrance of it is *grievous* unto him." But is it so in others ? No ; ask them what has been their grief, their sorrow, their pain

and suffering. They will say, if they speak true, "It has been the loss of my earthly goods, or the depriving me of my carnal gratifications, or the thwarting of my inclinations, and the devices and desires of my own heart; but *sin* never grieved me yet; on the contrary, sin has been that which I have looked to for pleasure, gratification, and joy." Do any of your consciences make this reply? Then woe is unto us who minister to you, if we do not tell you, in all earnestness, fidelity, and plainness of speech, that until sin is felt by you to be "an evil and bitter thing," until it "grieves" you to have committed it, and until you have prayed to be "kept" and "delivered" from it, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is not enough to say, "I am far from being one of those who "make a mock at sin;" I am no blasphemer, nor insulter of the divine Majesty, nor daring the vengeance of heaven by open and avowed profligacy." Ask yourself, in the secret recesses of your own heart, "Has the "evil" of sin ever *grieved*

me? Have I been *sorrowful* and *penitent* at the thought of having offended my gracious God and Saviour, by transgressing his holy laws? Is it my prayer to be *kept* from this greatest and worst of all evils? Enter into an examination of your state and condition before God. And while you are doing so, consider what that state and condition of soul must be, if you have never “grieved” for that which cast the very angels out of heaven, and drove our first parents from paradise, and brought misery and death into the world. That it should have brought the Son of God from heaven, and so have “grieved” *him* as to make him shed great drops of blood in his agony; yea, and to nail him to the very cross by its malignity; and to make Him a curse for us, though he knew no sin; and yet that it should never have “grieved” *you*! What condition of soul must yours be! Oh, call to mind, that though the *commission* of sin may *not* “grieve” you, the *punishment* of sin *must*. What are the “indignation and wrath, the tribulation and

anguish," which are to be "revealed from heaven against the ungodly,"— what are they but the accumulated "griefs" of *punishment* which sin entails upon those who have never been "grieved" at the *commission* of it! Look at the description given of it, in its punishment, by our Lord, as "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever;" and you will see the importance of the prayer, "Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." Make that prayer *your own*; God will "grant" it, and you will thus "flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold of eternal life."

But I am addressing some who have already, through divine grace, become partakers of the comforts and the blessings which this prayer of Jabez comprehends. Beloved brethren, let me remind you, in conclusion, that though this is the happy condition of your souls; though you have the "blessing indeed;" and though "the hand of God is with you;" and though He "keeps you from evil, that it may not grieve you;" yet still there is something

for you to long for and to pant for, and that is the “enlargement” of your *spiritual* “coast;” I mean the increase of your Christian graces, your religious attainments, your progress in the divine life, and in the faith, and hope, and love of your God and Saviour. Until you are with Him in glory; until you take your place at his right hand, and join the angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven;—I say, until this is your blessed and eternal portion, there will always be some increase of grace to seek after, and some preparative to glory to long for; there will always be some “enlargement” of your spiritual “coast” to desire and to pray for. The holy Apostle Paul found it so; and it will be well for you, if your desires and longings correspond with his. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend *that* for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

Imitate this holy pattern of longing desire after increased spirituality ; and it shall be testified of you, as it was of Jabez, that “ The Lord granted you that which you requested.”

SERMON III.

CHARACTER OF JUDAS.

JOHN xii. 4.

“ Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”

WE are about to call your attention, to-day, to a subject of peculiar awfulness and solemnity. It is necessary, in the investigation of the various characters brought before us in scripture, to take the *evil* as well as the *good*; and to endeavour to draw instruction as well from the most

wicked and abandoned, as from the most *holy and excellent*. We are assured that they are *all* held forth to us for this purpose by God ; and therefore it is only answering that blessed purpose for our own everlasting benefit, if we contemplate the very worst of them, with prayer for the divine blessing,—that blessing which God the Holy Ghost confers, when he shows us the natural corruption of our own hearts, the helplessness and insufficiency of our own strength, and the consequent necessity of seeking, at the throne of grace, the Lord's help, in time of need. I intreat you, therefore, while I am exposing to you the fearful enormities of the character and conduct of Judas, the Apostate and the Traitor, not to let your feeling of abhorrence at his crimes push aside the main object which we should have in view,—*self-application*.

I mean to treat the subject as exhibiting to us the case of a false professor of religion driven to destruction by the power of a besetting sin.

Look, first, at the *position* in which he stood, with regard to our blessed Lord, whom he betrayed. Judas had the high privilege of attending our Lord, during the whole course of his ministry; had witnessed his miracles, heard his exhortations, received into his understanding all the doctrines which were taught by that divine Master, and consented to follow him as a disciple. Added to this, he was “one of the twelve,” which gave him opportunities of the most intimate and unreserved intercourse with the Saviour. He had, too, so much confidence placed in him, that he had been appointed to carry the “bag,” or purse, which contained the little money which Jesus and his disciples needed for the supply of their wants, or to give to the poor; and besides all this, he had been invested, as the other apostles were, with the power of casting out devils, healing diseases, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. How great, then, his *privileges*, his *responsibilities*, and his *duties*! In the examination of his character, we

shall see how he abused his privileges, lost all sense of his responsibilities, and neglected his duties. And this, again, will show us how the flood-gates were opened for the commission of all his crimes. The "besetting sin," which became the fruitful source of so many others, was *covetousness*. Whether he joined the disciples under the influence of it we cannot tell; but, as we read his history, we soon become convinced of the power which this sordid sin had over him; and it almost induces us to believe, that he sought the office of holding the "bag," in order to gratify this wicked propensity. We find, on one occasion, that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, came where Jesus was sitting at meat; and in the fulness of her heart, overflowing with gratitude and love to her Saviour, anointed his sacred feet with ointment of spikenard, very costly. Judas pretended to be very much grieved that there should be such a "waste," as he termed it, "of the ointment;" for that "it might have been sold, and the

money given to the poor." But the Evangelist, St. John, who relates the fact, does not scruple to declare what the motive of Judas was: "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a *thief*, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Three sins are here seen in hateful contact, *covetousness*, *fraud*, and *hypocrisy*. I do not say that these sins are usually connected with each other; but we see how difficult it is to commit one sin without following it up with another. And how strong an argument it affords for the strictest watchfulness as to *any* and *every* sin! We know not what advantage Satan may take, and to what excesses he may drive us, if only he can find us *covetously* and *penuriously* disposed. It is a sin less frequently detected by the man who commits it than almost any other; and perhaps for this reason, that it is so difficult to persuade him that it is a sin. He will contend that what is thought by others to be his covetousness, is only his

prudence and caution, or his frugality and economy. He even thinks that he possesses a virtue for which he ought to be applauded, when he is in fact the slave of a vice for which God is angry with him every day. And though he may not be chargeable with *fraud*, as in the case before us, yet how justly may he be brought in guilty of "robbing God!" And "will a man rob God?" Yes, it is done by the covetous man, and he will even exercise his ingenuity to do it. It is by such as he that the sacred cause of *charity* is so much wronged and abused. He will contrive to bestow as little as possible upon the temporal wants of the poor, while he will be loudest in pitying their necessities, and asserting that they ought to be relieved; and he will make excuses for not giving out of his own purse what he is expected to give to the spiritual wants of others, by finding some fault with the charitable plans devised, or with the mode of carrying them into effect. Now, as I said before, though there is no *fraud*, as in the case of

Judas, in the sight of *men*, there is *robbery* in the sight of *God*, and it is God himself who is robbed. The covetous man acts as if he flatly denied the greatest of all truths, that what he possesses is not his own, but God's; and that God accounts him to be the steward of it, and will demand an account of it at last.

And is there no *hypocrisy* in all this? Undoubtedly there is; and it appears as plainly as in the case of Judas, who wanted to take to his own use the money for which the ointment might have been sold, while he was crying out against the "waste" of it. We see in the covetous man, "who is an idolater," a character that can never be *conformed* to the precepts and doctrines of the gospel, however he may *profess* them. Let a man endeavour to comfort himself as he may, with the flattering unction, that he is free from the grosser vices which some others are slaves to; there will always stand out against him one of the most terrible denunciations of the word of God: "The love

of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." That text stamps on him the brand of *hypocrisy*, while it points out his *miserable end*.

We shall see all this fearful denunciation carried into a practical fulfilment while we pursue our examination of the conduct of Judas.

It was after the murmuring against the "waste of the ointment," as it was called, and the consequent rebuke from our Lord, who said, "Let her alone, for she hath wrought a good work upon me:"—it was after *this* that the thought entered into the mind of Judas to *betray* his Master. St. Matthew then says, "And *from that time* he sought opportunity to betray him."

We can have no doubt, after this, that Judas was instigated by the devil to sell his Master, through the workings of the same covetousness which would have appropriated the value of the oil to himself. Perhaps, too, the rebuke of our Lord had

excited feelings of hatred and revenge: "*from that time* he sought opportunity to betray him." Let us now follow Judas through his other contrivances, till he had accomplished his hellish purpose.

Conceive, then, our Lord and his disciples sitting together, and partaking of the *last supper*. He was now just about to suffer; and his love for his disciples induced him to give them a token of it which they could never forget; while, at the same time, he teaches them a memorable lesson of humility, and of love towards each other: he washes his disciples' feet, and then says, "Ye are clean, but *not all*." Judas was there; his feet had been washed by his Master; and now he is made to see that *outward* cleansing, whether of "the cup," or of "the platter," or of the *false professor*, will not be of any avail; and, therefore, that his guilt is just what it would have been *without* this emblem of cleansing. And he is made to see, too, that Jesus evidently knew that the betrayer was one of his own disciples;

nay, he must have been convinced that Jesus knew *him* to be the traitor. If he did not *then*, he must immediately after; for our Lord says plainly, "One of you shall betray me." Instantly there is a commotion among the disciples. They are filled with horror and alarm; and inquire, "Lord, is it I?" and it seems not a little strange, that Judas, instead of mingling his question with the others, waits till all the rest have asked, and then says, "Lord, is it I?" Nay, between the inquiries of the other disciples and that of Judas, we are told of our Lord's awful denunciation of the traitor: "The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It were better for that man if he had never been born." *Then* Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Master, is it I?" At this moment, too, he had his hand in the dish with our Lord's; for said Jesus, when the disciples asked, "Lord, is it I?" as if to make it as plain as possible whom he meant, "He that dippeth his hand with

me in the dish, the same shall betray me.” What a state of mind must his have been, through the hardening influence of sin, to have endured the denunciation of his Lord; and, while his hand was in the dish, to say, “Lord, is it I?”

It is said in a previous verse, “*The devil* having put it into the heart of Judas to betray him.” That tempter and destroyer of souls found the heart of Judas a suitable receptacle for the horrid suggestion, and he “put it” there. *Covetousness* had tended to prepare his heart for the suggestion; and *that*, as we have seen, was made the vehicle of conveying it. How the sin of covetousness becomes more and more dangerous as we see its consequences developed here! “Take heed and beware of covetousness.”

But St. John has a remark which greatly increases the horror which all must feel at the dreadful condition of the traitor’s heart. He states, that our Lord pointed out Judas as “he who should do this thing,” by saying, “He it is to whom I

shall give a *sop* when I have dipped it," and he dipped the sop and gave it to Judas. The words which follow are those to which I wish to call your attention: "After the sop Satan entered into him." Not that this was the first time that Satan had instigated him to his wicked purpose, for it was said before, that "the devil had put it into the heart of Judas to betray him." But the words intimate the free will and consent of Judas to give himself up to Satan's influence and power. *Now* he had mastered his conscience, and hardened his heart, and prepared himself for the *act* and *deed* which, before, he had only been thinking of, and contriving. Since that first suggestion, he had, with an unbelieving and unthankful heart, been eating the Passover with his Lord; he had heard the warning voice which said, "Ye are clean, but not all: one of you shall betray me;" he had listened to the awful denunciation, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It were better for him that he had never been

born ;"—he had heard all this *unmoved* ; had heard it with "his hand in the dish," while the words were being spoken, and had shown no compunction ; had dared to say, "Lord, is it I ?" Showing by all this, that his heart was increasing in hardness ; that his conscience had become "seared, as with a hot iron ;" that his mind, will, affections, and designs, were all on Satan's side, and not on Christ's ; and, therefore, that he was twofold more the child of hell than before. Accordingly, it is said, that, instead of more admonitions, warnings, or threatenings, Jesus gives him "the sop."

That "sop" is the sure sign to Judas, that his Master will no more exhort or warn, or threat, but that he is now left to his own heart's lust, and to the completion of his treacherous design. That "sop" is his dismissal from his Master's presence, whose parting words to him are, "What thou doest do quickly." Looking at the condition to which Judas has now brought himself, how awfully appropriate are the words here used to describe it: "After

the sop, Satan entered into him !” Having before put the *suggestion* into his heart, Satan now comes in *himself* ; having suffered the suggestion to *work in his heart*, and thus by degrees to fit and prepare it as a habitation, Satan takes full possession of it, “ enters in, and dwells there ;” and “ the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

We must break off the narrative here, to make some observations. Who that hears this account does not say, “ How awful it is ! What enormous wickedness is here !” True ; but what occasioned it ? Was Judas differently constituted from ourselves ? Was he born with a heart more corrupt than yours or mine ? No, in no wise. The whole account merely shows what *any* heart may be brought to by the temptations of Satan operating on it, unchecked by the prayerful watchfulness which the grace of God produces. We have before shown, that the source from which all these enormities sprang was *covetousness* ; and what sin more common,

more besetting, or more deceitful, among *ourselves*? And what case more frequent in occurrence, than that of a man hurried on by an influence actually satanic, from one sin to another, in spite of all remonstrance, till the long-suffering of God waited no more? and the man seemed to be "let alone," and "joined to his idols;" so that, instead of more exhortation, or warning, such as he had so long been abusing, he may be said, like Judas, to have "received the *sop*," and thus to have been dismissed, as the traitor was, from his Master's presence, and sent "to his own place." Oh, let it not be lost upon us because the case is that of *Judas*; let it not be put aside, as something too wicked for such as *we* to contemplate; let it not be considered as a case which can never occur again, because the death of Christ was occasioned by it. But let us be assured, that though we cannot "kill the Lord of life," as Judas did, yet we can give way to a besetting sin, as Judas did; we can suffer it to become the fruitful

source of other sins, as Judas did; we can go from bad to worse, as Judas did; till there is no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which must consume us as adversaries. And *then*, what will there be to distinguish our condition from that of Judas, when, after disregarding his Master's warnings and admonitions, he "received the *sop*," and "Satan entered into him," and he "departed to his own place?" Would we see where our security lies? Would we know how to protect ourselves from the successful assaults of Satan? The apostle Paul will tell us, in few but pointed words: "Let us lay aside every weight, and *the sin that so easily doth beset us*; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,—*looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith." How important the admonition! "Looking unto Jesus." Looking off from other things, (so the word signifies,) in order that we may the more intently and fixedly keep our eyes of faith on Jesus, for help and strength;—*that*

Jesus who has already vanquished our enemy for us on the cross, and has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. *There* lies all our security, all our protection, and all our success against Satan. Thus secure and thus protected, who need fear to hold out against him? How can Satan find a lodgment in that heart which Jesus has already occupied? How can the devil "enter in" where the Saviour has his habitation? And is not the heart of a *believer in Christ* declared by St. Paul to be "the habitation of God, through the Spirit?" How graciously has the Lord provided for our comfort and support in this matter! When we read of Satan's "entering into" Judas, we almost tremble while we read: the words are so strong, and the idea is so frightful. But let us look at the language by which the blessed state of a *believer* is described, and we shall find it as strong as that which designates the miserable state of the *apostate*. Let us examine the idea conveyed to us by

such words, and we shall see that they declare as forcibly the joy, and peace, and happiness of a *true* disciple of Christ, as these terrific expressions set forth the misery and despair of the *false* one. "Lord," said one of the disciples, "*how* is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us?" Jesus said, "If a man love me, my father will love him; and we will come unto him, and *make our abode with him.*" Can any language be stronger than that? Can we conceive the love and tender compassion of our God and Saviour to have been, by any possibility, made known to us by words more intelligible, more forcible, or more endearing? They denote that sweet and intimate fellowship which exists between God and his faithful servant, through Christ the merciful Redeemer, by the influence of the Holy Spirit. They are intended to show the constancy and perpetuity of it. They contain the assurance of its being carried on until grace is perfected in glory, and until the believer is taken up to *heaven*. And what is heaven to the

believer? It is "his own place," as much so as *hell* is the place of the *apostate*. Heaven is "his own place," because Jesus *procured* it for him by his blood and his righteousness; *promised* it to him with his lips of everlasting truth; *prepared* it for him, when he rose from the dead, and ascended up on high; is now *keeping* it for him, till the appointed time of his actual possession; and will then *come* for him, in his glory, and with the holy angels, that where Jesus himself is, there his disciple may be also. Oh may heaven be thus made, by divine grace, *your* "own place," and *mine*! May those sweet words of comfort be our portion, by the Spirit's witness in our hearts, "I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am, there ye may be also."

SERMON IV.

THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS.

(Continued.)

MATT. xxvii. 3.

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself.”

WE were occupied, during our last Lecture, with an examination of the character, the awful character, of Judas. We commented on those circumstances which tended to its fearful development, up to the period when, after having received the “sop,” from the hands of

his divine Master, it is said, "Satan entered into him." Judas is stated to have then left the room, in which he had been partaking of the passover with our Lord and the disciples; and we do not hear of him again, till he makes his appearance in the garden of Gethsemane, as the leader of an armed multitude, to betray Jesus, and deliver him into their hands. But we must turn aside, for a moment, to contemplate him in the presence of the chief priests and elders, covenanting with them for the price at which he should do this accursed thing.

"What will ye give me?" It was not the *lack* of money, but the *love* of it, that made him say this. The chief-priests, on their part, agree to give him the smallest sum that he would accept,—so small indeed, that it seems probable Judas expected to be remunerated in some other way afterwards, or he would not have taken it; for the "thirty pieces of silver," which were paid to him by the chief priests, did not amount to more than three pounds fifteen

shillings of our money ; and that sum was, in fact, the price that was appointed by the law to be paid for a slave who had been accidentally killed. Judas, however, took the money ; and from that time he sought opportunity to betray his Master.

Here, then, is the besetting sin of *covetousness* increasing so in power and influence over the heart of Judas, as to bring him to the most horrid and accursed act that was ever committed. But covetousness is not the *only* besetting sin that a man may be guilty of : there is a “legion” of them ; and the power of any one sin that “besets” the man, may, in time, bring him to destruction. See the ensnaring nature of mere *worldly-mindedness*. It will gain on a man, till it has brought him to yield himself up to its fatal influence ; and he stands before its temptations, as Judas did before the chief priests, and says, “What will ye give me ?”—“*Pomps and vanities of this wicked world !* What will ye give me ? It is true, I promised and vowed, in my baptism, to *renounce* ye all ;

but what will ye give me if I break my vow? What measure of gratification, and what amount of pleasure, will ye give me, if I forsake my Master Christ, and go with you?—*Sinful lusts of the flesh!* What will ye give me? It is true, I promised and vowed, in my baptism, to *renounce* you all; but what will ye give me if I break my vow? What sensual delights will ye put before me, and what carnal indulgences will ye offer me, if I cast away my allegiance to Christ my Master, and throw aside my engagement with him, and come over to your side, and join myself with you?"

Then these enemies of Christ will "covenant" with the poor deluded wretch, as the chief priests "covenanted" with Judas. And how small the amount of gratification they afford! how little they give him of pleasure! how low the price they offer for his eternal hopes, and his immortal soul! He goes his way however; takes his price and his pleasure; content, though with no more than what

the pittance of "thirty pieces of silver" were to Judas. We shall see, shortly, what is likely to become of such an one. Meanwhile we return to Judas. He has begun to perform his part of the "covenant" made with the chief priests. We are told, "there was a *garden*, into which Jesus and his disciples entered. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place." There appears something very affecting in this, if you consider *how* it was that Judas "knew the place." He had himself been one of the "disciples" who had been accustomed to go there with Jesus. It was in that "garden" that Jesus had spoken some of his most solemn heart-searching discourses; and Judas had heard them. It was there that Jesus had expressed his most endearing sympathy with his disciples, and his love for them, and his tender care of them; and had, in his most familiar manner, cautioned and warned and comforted them.

Had Judas paused then, in his dreadful

career, and given himself time for thought, what agonizing reflections might have crossed his mind ! “Wretch that I am, what am I about to do ? How often have I heard that blessed one speak to me the words of holy exhortation in this very garden ! It was here that he used to lift the souls of his followers to heavenly contemplations, and cause their hearts to burn within them. It was here that I heard him say things which should have made me tremble. It was here that he uttered those words, ‘Take heed and beware of *covetousness*.’ And now I am come to deliver him up to his enemies, having received thirty pieces of silver as the gratification of *my* covetousness, for betraying my master, my admonisher, and my friend !” But no such thoughts as these could have entered his mind ; or, if they did, he must instantly have dismissed them as too tormenting to be endured, unless they had led him to forsake his hateful purpose, and to go and fling himself, in

penitence and contrition, at the feet of his injured Master.

Let us try to make the recollections of our past seasons of spiritual privileges the safeguards against sin and the temptation to it. Call to mind the *precepts* of the holy Jesus which you have formerly read, the *doctrines* of salvation which you have been taught, the *meditations* on his love and grace which you may have enjoyed, and the *prayers* which you have offered up for his protection and blessing; and think,—“Should I, after such past privileges, go back, and act as if I was disowning my Lord? Should I admit a sin into my bosom, which will be like a scorpion there, stinging me to death? O no, God forbid! I will renew my dedication to my Saviour. I will go to my secret place, where my prayer was offered before. I will cultivate renewed communion with my God; and I will strive after a closer walk with him.”

It was before stated that Judas had “received a band of men and officers from

the chief priests and pharisees ;” and now they are coming, with Judas at their head, just as our Lord is enjoining on his disciples the necessity of *watchfulness* and *prayer*, in consequence of their having slept while he was praying in such agony, that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” While he yet spake, Judas came. Before he drew near to his Master he had given the men who came with him “a sign ;” for, as the soldiers did not know our Lord from his disciples, one of *them* might have been seized, by mistake, instead of *him*. “He gave them a sign,” to point out Jesus distinctly to them. And what was that “sign ?” You would say, perhaps, that, slinking back into the dark, for fear of being discovered, he would *point with his finger*, saying to the men, “I must not show myself to him, nor let my voice be heard by him ; for my conscience or my feelings might overcome me, and I might fail to do what I have undertaken : I will only point to him with my finger.” Was

this the “sign?” No ; instead of this, he says, “ Whomsoever I shall *kiss*, the same is he ;” and he goes up to Jesus, fearless of being overcome either by conscience or feeling ; he addresses him by the usual title of respect and endearment, “ Master ;” he says, “ *Hail*, Master !” an expression by which every comfort, joy, and happiness were intimated, as the prayer of him that uttered it, for him to whom it was spoken ; and then he “kissed him ;” thus *setting his seal*, as it were, to the infamous lie that he had uttered, and the hypocritical profession of respect and love that he had made. This was the traitor’s “sign,” and the traitor’s *seal*. How does our Lord receive this salutation ? He “knew what was in man ;” he knew why Judas had thus accosted him, and why he had thus kissed him. But he makes no *reproachful* answer : he only says “ Friend, wherefore art thou come ?” reminding him, by that word, of the former confidence and friendship in which they had lived, and which Judas was now violating. And then

he says, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" as though he had said, "Hast thou not confessed me as thy Lord, and declared thyself to be my follower? And now dost thou come, and with that very *kiss* which is the *sign* of dutiful affection, and humble gratitude, dost thou make a *sign* to my enemies to take me, and conduct me to a cruel and ignominious death?" How cutting to the very heart were these words, had Judas been susceptible *now* of any compunction, or remorse! But he was not. Satan had not yet made *all* the use he intended of this instrument; and therefore compunction and remorse had no place *yet* in Judas.

Before proceeding further, I wish to make a remark or two, in a way of *application*. We have before us the account of the blackest crime that was ever committed; and, in one sense, it cannot be perpetrated by any one on earth. And yet, in another sense, it stands out as the very type and emblem of *that sin* which the human heart is *most* prone to commit,

and which is therefore *most* frequently bringing down the wrath of the Almighty on the professors of the religion of Jesus.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of some who “crucify the Son of God *afresh*, that is, by their *character* and *conduct*, and put him to open shame;” and what he says of the *crucifixion* of our Lord, may be said also of his *betrayal*. The sins of those who say to Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” by their professed allegiance, and yet follow the devices and desires of their own corrupt hearts, are closely allied to that of Judas, when he treacherously said, “Hail, Master,” and kissed him. To profess to know Christ, and yet in works to deny him, is a sin of the very same nature as that of Judas. It makes our profession of religion and our practice to contradict each other; it brings the Gospel of Christ into contempt and abhorrence; it occasions the ungodly to blaspheme that holy name by which we are called; it tells to all around us, that our religion is a mere uninfluential

thing, a mask of hypocrisy, an outward appearance devoid of reality, and a plot by which we attempt to impose upon others, while, like Judas, we are only ruining ourselves. As it regards our heavenly Master, we do, as it were, *give him up* into the hands of his enemies ; we *lead on* the multitude of those who hate him ; and this we do under the specious guise of being his *disciples*, and while we are saying, “ Hail Master,” and kissing him. What says Jesus to this, as he looks on it from heaven ? “ Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ? ”

The other remark that I would make is, that when men are instigated by the evil one, it is astonishing how *active* and *diligent* they are in their wicked works ; and how eagerly and boldly they will prosecute their malicious purposes, even at the most fearful hazards, and with consequences in view which others cannot contemplate without trembling. Look at Judas ! He has the wages of iniquity before him ; and, for the “ thirty pieces of silver,” he so works his way to the accom-

plishment of his horrid determination, that the impediments of natural feeling, and the scruples of natural conscience, are made to give way before him ; so that, having mastered and got the better of them all, he goes to Jesus ; insults him by his salutation ; and, unwelcome as he is, impresses the kiss of his treachery on the cheek of his divine Master, and then delivers him over to death. He rests not till he has done it all. Now let us look at *ourselves*. It is as needful for us to make our way to Jesus, in order to be *saved* by him, as it was for Judas to do so, in order to *betray* him. And yet, can we say that we are equally zealous, and active, and persevering, *to obtain salvation from him*, as Judas was *to give him up to death* ? Do we resist and overcome obstacles, as Judas did ? Do we get the mastery over our corruptions and lusts, as he did over his conscience and feelings ? Do we *hasten* to our Lord ? No ; although we know that we shall not be asked, “ Friend, wherefore art thou come ? ” but received by him with

open arms, yet we hesitate, and delay, and make excuses, as though eternal death, instead of life everlasting, would be the consequence of going to him. He cries, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" yet we stay away. He says, "Give me thy heart;" yet we keep it back. He commands us to "*kiss* the son, lest he be angry, and we should perish from the right way;" yet we obey not. Till at last, He says to some, as he did to Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!" Oh! it will be well for those who have thus been injuring their own souls, and disregarding the proffered mercy of the meek and lowly Jesus, if the case of Judas should stimulate them to go to that Saviour for *salvation*, whom the traitor so anxiously sought out, in order to deliver him to *death*.

We must now hasten to the contemplation of another scene, connected with this agent of Satan, in the death of our Lord. In an apartment within the precincts of the temple, which was the council-cham-

ber, the chief priests assembled, to carry on their consultations against Jesus. In the midst of their engagement, however, they are disturbed. There rushes in among them a man, with terror and despair marked on his countenance, and his voice almost stifled with extreme grief and agitation. In his hand he bears a bag of money; and, going up to the chief priests, he cries, with bitter lamentation, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Surprised at the appearance of the poor agitated wretch who stands before them, they recognize Judas. He has done the fatal deed; he has accomplished the purpose for which he was employed. And now, at the very moment when he expected to be enjoying the fruits of it, the wages of his iniquity are felt to be a plague and a curse to him. The thirty pieces of silver, though so small a price to receive for his hire, have become a burthen that is intolerable; and he cannot rest till he is rid of it. *Now* it is that the full tide, the overwhelming flood, of compunction and re-

morse, flow in upon his heart and conscience. *This* it is that causes his terror and agitation, when he rushes into the council-chamber; and *this* makes him cry, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." And it is important to mark the character and behaviour of these chief priests and elders, as distinguished from those of Judas: *He* all agitation, distraction, and despair! *They* cool, calm, calculating, and sarcastic, merely say, "What is that to *us*? See *thou* to that." "What is that to *us*?" Were not they the men who hired Judas to commit the deed? Did they not pay him the thirty pieces of silver which he was now holding in his hand? Did they not give him that money for the express purpose of procuring the death of his Master? and did they not call it, themselves, on that account, "the price of blood?"

And yet there they sit, as if they had not the least concern in the matter; and they say, with an affectation of simplicity and innocence worthy of Satan himself,

“What is that to *us*?” We see here how differently men are affected by the various workings of sin and Satan on the mind, heart, and conscience; and what different stages they pass through, in their downward road to destruction. Judas has passed through the period of boldness and hardy determination into that of fear, horror, and despair. The others have that yet to come. At present their minds are so darkened and obscured, that whatever sin there is in this act, they lay it to the charge of Judas, and say, “See *thou* to that.” Their object is obtained, for Jesus is delivered up. “Judas has done the act,” say they, “and let *him* bear the blame for ever!”

And is not this precisely the way in which those *tempters* that we spoke of, “the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh,” deal with any poor deceived one who has been taken in their snares, and ruined? If he remonstrates, under the power of conviction and remorse, and laments that

ever he listened to their enticements, what is their reply? Virtually they say, as those enemies of Christ said to Judas, "What is that to *us*? See *thou* to that." "It was *our* business to seduce you, and to deceive you, and to ruin you. It was *yours* to avoid the snare. Satan employed us to bring you under his power. You yielded, and are his captive. Success is ours; ruin is yours; that ruin is eternal; but what is that to *us*?"

No wonder that Judas, in the paroxysm of his mental agony, threw down the thirty pieces of silver before them, and rushed out of their presence in a state of despair. He had now to endure not only the reflection of having "sold himself to work wickedness," but the exasperating contempt and disdain of those who hired him to do the horrid deed.

Had those chief priests, or any of them, gone forth from their council-house, to see what had become of Judas when he left them, how lamentable the sight that would have met their eyes! They would have

seen lying, probably at the foot of some hill or rising ground, or beneath some tree, a mangled and disfigured corpse, prostrate, and "burst asunder;" with the remnant of a rope round the neck of it, showing too plainly that it was the body of one who had "hanged himself." And if they could have borne to examine the features, they would have recognized those of the miserable Judas.

Thus fearfully and fatally terminated the wicked plans and contrivances of one who, for "the love of money," betrayed his Master, destroyed his life, and ruined his soul.

There is a passage in St. James's Epistle, which so minutely describes the case of Judas, that I will quote it, before I close, as the best comment on the history of the whole transaction. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of *his own lust*, and enticed." How

many miserable deaths have testified to the truth of this text ! How many melancholy suicides have declared to us, that sin carries its own punishment in this world, as well as in the world to come ! “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin,” —sin which bites, and stings, and torments the self-deceived perpetrator of it, till, its horrid commission having terminated,” it bringeth forth “death” by the *rope*, “death” by the *razor*, “death” by the *pistol*, “death” by a man’s *own hand*, “death” which hurries him into the presence of the eternal Judge, in the character of a *murderer* ; “and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life.”

The text which I have just quoted forms an application of this subject, made by the Holy Ghost. Praying *Him* to enable us all to make a profitable use of it, I will offer but one observation, in conclusion. How unspeakably valuable is that *divine grace*, which is able to keep us, helpless as we are in ourselves, from those sins which Judas committed, and by which he fell

into destruction and perdition ! That divine grace will be granted us if we pray for it. We need not doubt it, for God has promised it. Armed with that divine grace, we may defy every enemy, even Satan himself, the tempter, the accuser, and the destroyer of the souls of men. He whom Judas betrayed is now exalted to *bestow* it. He has procured the *right* of bestowing it, by his sufferings and death. We have only to commit ourselves to Him, in faith, and love, and holy obedience, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against us. It is the unspeakable joy of the believer, that while the “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” is *reserved for him* ; he is himself *kept for it* “by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.” Therefore “unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

SERMON V.

THE BRANCH.

ZECHARIAH vi. 12.

“ Behold, the man whose name is *the Branch*.”

IN bringing before you this remarkable emblem of the Lord Jesus Christ, I need not dwell on the context. You will see, by referring to it, that the words of the text are addressed to Joshua, the high-priest, and that they represent the divine Saviour; declaring that he was, in due time, to assume human nature, being born of a virgin of the family of David, in the city of Bethlehem; that from small beginnings he would grow up to extraordinary great-

ness and honour; that he, and he only, should build the *true* "Temple of the Lord," of which Solomon's temple, and that which Joshua and Zerubbabel were building, were only *types*; and that this true temple would consist of the whole company of redeemed sinners, gathered from all parts of the world, quickened and converted by divine grace, and made "a habitation of God through the Spirit," of which *he* should "bear the glory." In setting the Saviour thus before Joshua the high-priest, the Lord gives to his coequal Son the designation of our text: "Behold the *man*:" you observe how distinctly his *human nature* is pointed out, at the very time when his *eternal godhead* is implied by his "building *the* temple of the Lord," the *spiritual* temple, and "bearing all the glory:" "Behold the *man*, whose name is the *Branch*!" It is by this emblem that the springing from "the root of David" is made to signify his *lowliness*; it represents the family of David as "a root in a dry

ground." But still the vital principle is not gone, a tender shoot springs forth from the root, and by degrees rises towards heaven, and reaches to the throne of God. Such is "the *man*, whose name is the *Branch*."

Let us, then, proceed to examine this "branch" so presented to us for contemplation.

See, in the first place,

1st. The *beauty* of this "branch." What is it that most especially constitutes the beauty of the divine character? We can have no hesitation in saying, that it is not to be found either in God's *justice*, on the one hand, though his justice is infinite; nor in his *mercy*, on the other, though his mercy endureth for ever; but it is to be found in the marvellous *union* of both, and in that *harmony* between those two divine attributes, by which God can be "a just God, and a Saviour." And as that union and harmony have been discovered perfect and complete in the person of the Lord

Jesus, the God-Man-Mediator, we do indeed exhibit to you the very perfection of *beauty*, when we say, "Behold the *man*, whose name is the Branch !"

True it is, that when it was prophesied of him that he should "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," it was said of him, "he hath *no* form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is *no* beauty, that we should desire him." But these expressions refer to the meanness of his birth, and to the prejudices of his nation. The Jews expected him to come forth in a splendid manner as a King and a Conqueror; whereas he came forth, and grew up, in comparative obscurity; and when he became known, it was only as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" it was only to be "despised and rejected of men," who "hid as it were their faces from him, and esteemed him not." This prophecy was *accurately true*, and *wonderfully fulfilled*. But what said other prophecies respecting him? Their language seemed

actually to contradict that which I have just quoted. The glories of his kingdom were as much displayed in those prophecies, as the meanness of his origin was in these. Mark the exalted strains in which he is announced, and with this designation too: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will raise up unto David a righteous *branch*, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth." But look now into our Lord's own history, and see how these apparent contradictions were manifested, and at the same time reconciled. There is a point in that history which will at once show them to us with a minuteness most affecting. When the blessed Jesus had suffered the utmost indignities,—when he had been buffeted, and scourged, and spit upon,—when he had been made to endure the torture of the crown of thorns, and to stand before the scoffing multitude, clothed with a purple robe, and bearing a reed in his hand, as tokens of mock majesty; I say, when our Lord had reached

this point in his sorrows and sufferings, he seemed to be at the very lowest condition short of actual crucifixion. It was at this moment accordingly, that Pilate brought him forth to the people, to show them *how* low and *how* despicable he was; so much so, that the governor seemed to make that an argument with the enraged multitude, that they should no longer continue to torment or insult him. And how does he do this? St. John tells us, "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. Pilate saith unto them, "Behold the man!" The very words of our text! But how different their signification! "Behold the poor wretched degraded creature! Can any one be more vile or contemptible?" But at this very moment of his utmost degradation, the prophecy was fulfilling which called the whole world to look on him as the "King of kings and Lord of lords;" and God the eternal Father was displaying to these very sinners who were about to crucify his Son, the

glory which belonged to him, saying, in Pilate's words, "Behold the man!" for *he* is the *king* who is to "reign and prosper, and to execute justice and judgment in the earth;" and this is the name whereby *he* is to be called, "The Lord *your* righteousness." Accordingly, at this moment of his *lowest degradation*, our Lord asserts before Pilate his *highest dignity*. Pilate said unto him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered. "My *kingdom* is not of this world." Pilate said unto him, "Art thou a *king* then?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Not only did he "bear witness unto the truth," as it respected the way in which sinners may be restored to God's image and favour; but to the truth of those prophecies which, however *contradictory* to all appearance, were yet *harmonizing* in him, as the "despised and rejected of men," and yet "the Lord our righteousness;" as the vile

“malefactor” who was thought worthy to be crucified, and yet the “king who should reign and prosper, and execute justice and judgment in the earth.”

The harmony of these contradictions constitutes the *beauty* of his character, because they display the union of the divine and human natures in his sacred person ; and that *beauty* we exhibit to you when we say, “Behold the *man* whose name is the *Branch* !”

2nd. The *shadiness* of this “Branch.” The very term seems to bring to our minds the *exposed* state of the sinner, in the “weary land” of this world. He stands exposed to the wrath of God ; and that wrath is burning wrath, for he is a sin-avenging God. The sinner wants for his soul what the traveller wants for his body, when exposed to the fierce and darting rays of an eastern sun ; he wants *shade*,—something that will interpose between him and the intense heat from above, and afford him a protection from it.

The prophet Isaiah represents the Saviour, therefore, as “a *shadow* from the heat.” The rays of the divine anger never dart through the shade of “the *branch* of his righteousness,” and therefore all who flee under the shadow of it are safe: “whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the *shadow* of the Almighty.” By whatever emblem the precious blood and the perfect righteousness of Christ are represented to us in scripture, the idea conveyed is always that of security against the effects of divine wrath consequent on human transgression. The shade of “the righteous branch” is the interposing mediation of our exalted Redeemer; it is the pleading of our sympathizing Intercessor, even of “Jesus Christ the righteous,” who is “the propitiation for our sins.” He extends his welcome shade over the poor exhausted sinner, who takes refuge under him, and who in penitent faith longs for the security which it affords; while all those who stand aloof from

it must endure, without any mitigation, the fiery wrath of eternal condemnation. Not even the rocks, if they were to fall on them, nor the mountains, if they were to cover them, could hide them, in the great and terrible day, from that wrath which *now* every penitent sinner may escape from by fleeing for refuge under the shade of "the *branch* of the Lord's righteousness." And how delightful is the thought, that the shade of this "branch" is *extending itself every day*! Not only one here and there, or a few from every quarter, are taking refuge under it; but multitudes from all lands, and from the far distant nations, are hastening to it. Nor shall this flocking of immortal souls under the *shadow* of the "branch" be checked or hindered, "till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more." The accomplishment of the sure word of prophecy, the fulfilment of the "exceeding great and precious promises," the maintaining in its divine perfection

the everlasting covenant, require that the people of God out of all the nations of the earth shall be gathered together under this "branch of the Lord's righteousness," and so be saved through Christ for ever. "Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free," all are to be gathered together *there*; for *there*, according to the prophecy, promise, oath, and covenant of God, and there *only*, can the needful and the appointed rest and shelter be found for them. O glorious day, when "the stem of Jesse" shall cover the whole earth; when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;" when "they shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," under the shadow of "the Lord's righteousness!" May the Lord hasten it in his time!

Connected with the idea of the *shadiness* of this "branch is—

3rd. Its *fruitfulness*. There is some-

thing peculiarly delightful in these two emblems being so closely *united* in scripture. In the book of Canticles, the Church of Christ is represented as enjoying the full spiritual blessings of communion with her Lord, under these united emblems: "I sat down under his *shadow* with great delight, and his *fruit* was sweet to my taste." She is weary and faint, and needs not only rest for her weariness, but refreshment for her faintness. The *rest* she obtains from the *shadow* of the "branch," and the *refreshment* from the *fruit* of it. She finds the "shadow" and the "fruit" to be delightful to her, in proportion to what she had suffered *before* she cast herself under that "shadow," and partook of that "fruit." You will find this very beautifully described in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, where mention is made of the "tree of life," which grew in the midst of the street of the holy Jerusalem, and on either side of the river of the water of life, which proceeded out of the throne of God and of

the Lamb. It is said of that "tree," that it "bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded its fruit every month."

Now, in contemplating this "tree of life," we need not take off our eyes from the "branch" spoken of in our text; for only one and the same object is presented to us, and that is the adorable *Jesus*, conferring upon his own church and people, the gracious and the glorious benefits which he is exalted to bestow. We see a "tree" rising nobly towards heaven, and spreading abroad its branches, bowed down with the richest fruits; thus becoming the ornament and the happiness of the plains below. This "is the man whose name is the *Branch*." See in these "fruits" how full and how various are the blessings which he bestows. Their being brought forth "every month" intimates that they are always in a state of ripeness, always fresh, and always ready for use and enjoyment. The variety of *his blessings* renders them just suited for the variety of *our wants*. O, how delicious are these "fruits" to the taste of a penitent

inner, or a spiritually-minded believer, as they hang clustering down to the lower world, and are spread all around us, in “the glorious gospel of our blessed God!” Many of you have, I trust, been enabled to discern the *suitable* excellency of your divine Saviour; and have enjoyed from him the “fruits” of redeeming mercy, justifying righteousness, sanctifying grace, and that peace with God which is the foretaste of the happiness of heaven.

But while on this head of our subject, we must not forget the *medicinal* virtue of its *leaves*. Those leaves are not only intended for *shade*, but for *healing*. So says the Prophet Ezekiel: “The *fruit* thereof shall be for *meat*, and the *leaves* for *medicine*.” St. John, in his description of it, says the same: “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” How the value of it is enhanced by the idea that the very “leaves” have a virtue in them which is sufficient for the healing of the spiritual maladies of all the nations of the earth! What but these “leaves”

compose "the balm that is in Gilead,"—that "balm," by the application of which "the hurt of the daughter of my people may be recovered," saith the Lord. We praise Him, that these "leaves" are, at this moment doing their blessed work among the "nations" who are to be "healed" among them. The precepts and doctrines of the gospel are going abroad through all the earth; and the inhabitants are receiving the "true saying and worthy of all acceptance," that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and that "his righteousness justifies from all things from which men could not be justified by the law." And, in proof of the saving efficacy of these "leaves" when applied to the wounded heart and the sin-sick conscience, we hear, from time to time, the thanksgivings of those who have been "healed" by them: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, and *healeth all thy diseases*; who redeemeth

thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

There remains one more particular to be adverted to, and that is—

4th. The *strength* of this "branch." We are called on particularly to notice this, because it is mentioned in a subsequent verse: after stating that "the man whose name is *the Branch*" should build the *spiritual* Temple of the Lord, it is said, "and he shall *bear the glory*." The "glory" of the *kingly* office, and the "glory" of the *priestly*, are his; and he "bears them" in his own sacred person and character. When on earth, he "bore" the *cross*;—*that* was his "glory:" now that he is in heaven, he "bears" the *crown*; and *that* is his "glory" too. "The government is upon his shoulder,"—the government of all things in heaven and earth;—all things appertaining to his church, both militant and triumphant; and he "bears the glory" of them all. Hence it is declared by Isaiah, "They shall *hang* upon him ("whose

name is *the Branch*") all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flaggons : " intimating, as I conceive, that he should bear the weight of all the cares and concerns of his whole church, both small and great, even of every individual, however important, or insignificant ; and that he should be found both able and willing to support them all. So then, *you* are invited to "cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." What is it that distresses you, and makes you "go mourning all the day long?" Whatever it is, "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Sins and sorrows, bodily suffering and mental anguish,—whether the afflictions are such as may be contained in the "vessels of small quantity," as "cups ;" or whether they are so large as to fill the "flaggons ;"—put them on the appointed receiver of all such ; hang them on "the branch ;" and you will see how strong it is, and how able to bear

them, in all their distressing magnitude, and in all their overwhelming weight. The burden to you is intolerable; but "the man whose name is *the Branch*" can and will sustain it. Himself bears our sins and carries our sorrows, and in order to show us *how*, it is said, "He bare our sins in his own *body* on the *tree*." Yes, it was while the accursed "tree" was bearing the sacred body of "the *man* Christ Jesus," that he, "whose name is *the Branch*," was proclaiming to a lost world his "eternal power and godhead," by "bearing the sins of the whole world," and enduring the wrath of God which would have sunk that world to hell.

See the strength of this "branch" in another point of view. Perhaps I am addressing some *desponding* soul,—some one who says, with David, "From the very *depths* have I cried unto thee, O Lord! O Lord, hear my supplication." It is the language of one who is "sinking in deep waters;" for "they have gone over his soul." What more affecting

to witness than the struggles and the cries of *a drowning man*? We have seen perhaps such an one striving, in his last agony, and almost in despair, to lay hold of something that might keep him above water, some overhanging *branch* that he could cling to for help; but, alas, as soon as his eager hand had grasped it, he found how weak it was: it broke, and he fell back again into the stream. Spiritual *despondency* is to the Christian like such a stream to a drowning man; but the “branch” we are speaking of is not like *that*. No; it bends down indeed to the brink of the water of tribulation, for it is the condescending *manhood* of the Saviour. But it is “the branch that God hath made so *strong* for himself;” and that strength is perfected in all weakness; for it is the very omnipotence of the *Godhead*. Oh let the poor down-cast desponding soul lay hold of it, when sinking in the waters of affliction; and he shall find that it will not break; it will not give way; it will not let him fall back again into the stream. No: it shall be

to him what the arm of that mighty one was, to whom Peter, when he began to sink in the deep, cried, "Lord, save me!" That arm was the arm of "the *man* whose name is the *Branch*;" it was proved to be so, by exercising a power which belonged to *God*. The deliverance which it wrought for Peter is but a faint representation of what it can and will effect for *you*, if only in penitent faith you *lay hold of it*.

And lastly, if the weakness of despondency may find the apt emblem of strength suited to it in this "branch;" so may the most vigorous and active faith and love find also as apt an emblem of *that* on which they should exercise their holiest and most constant energies. One of the most beautiful and perfect representations of the believer cleaving to Christ, is the closely-clinging *ivy* encircling the strong and mighty *oak*.

May *we* thus be continually cleaving to him, "growing up into Christ in all things,"—"being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Let us be careful

never to lose our hold; but to be still clinging closer and closer, striking deeper and deeper, in the daily exercise of faith and love; making progress in the divine life; and giving evidence that “ we *dwell* in Christ and Christ in us; that we are *one* with Christ and Christ with us.”

SERMON VI.

ELIJAH'S FIERY CHARIOT.

2 KINGS, ii. 11.

“And it came to pass, that, as they still went on, and talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder ; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof ! And he saw him no more.”

“IT is appointed unto all men once to die,” because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In this sense, as well as in others still more awful, it is true, that “the wages of sin is death.” From this general sentence of the destruction of the body in the grave, there have been two miraculous exceptions ; one be-

fore the deluge, and one since ; as if God would have a memorial in either world, and a pledge given to all ages, of the final glorification of the body of a believer, and its union with the soul, by receiving to himself, in these two instances, both body and soul together into heaven. The honour conferred upon Enoch and Elijah was that they should have glorified bodies, immediately on their departure from earth ; whereas others must wait for them till “the resurrection of the just.” The account given of Enoch is short, but remarkably expressive of his character ; and containing a dignity and simplicity, a mystery and a majesty, which are unspeakably beautiful : “Enoch walked with God ; and he was not, for God took him.” The account given of Elijah’s departure is more at large, but not less sublime : “a fiery chariot, and horses of fire,” that is, angels under those appearances, are seen waiting for the servant of God ; and, as soon as he has finished the work which has been given him to do, he is “carried by a

whirlwind into heaven." Wonderful dispensation to man ! He that "maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire," says, for the comfort of His church, "are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?"

We have not, indeed, any divine intimation as to the time when it may please God to call us hence, as Elijah had ; but we have intimations of another kind, and those proceeding from the word and providence of God, which ought not to be misunderstood. What are our passing years, our sicknesses, our infirmities, our liability to death from the thousands of accidental pains and calamities which are daily surrounding us, but so many intimations that soon we shall be taken hence ? and what are all those texts which put death before our minds in every point of view, and under every possible figure and emblem ? Are they not intimations to us of the nearness of our latter end ? Why is our life compared to "a vapour," to "a

dream when one awaketh," to "a weaver's shuttle," to "a mariner's voyage," and to "a traveller's journey?" Why is it written, "Arise ye, and depart hence, for this is not your rest?" Why did the voice of the Lord say unto the prophet, "Cry, all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; surely the people is grass?" Why, but to keep our minds alive to a subject of all others the most awful and important, by a continued intimation of our nearness to an eternal world, and of the necessity of our being prepared to enter it. In this way death was received by the patriarch Jacob: "Now the time drew near that Israel must die." How did he meet the summons? "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." And then "Israel gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his fathers." How did Simeon bear the prospect of it? He had "waited for the consolation of Israel;" and when it came, in the person of the infant Saviour, he took

him up in his arms, and said, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." How does the whole Church of Christ receive the declaration, when he says, "Behold, I come quickly?" They are described as receiving it with *joy*: "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Yes, there is a holy *longing* sometimes felt by the believer, when the joys of heaven are beaming before the eye of faith: "O that I had wings like a dove," said David, "for then would I flee away, and be at rest." "I have a desire to depart," said Paul, "and to be with Christ, which is far better;" as if, knowing that the change would be a glorious one for him, and longing for the time when the angelic messengers should convey him to it, he had said, "Why is his chariot so long in coming, why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" I do not mean to say that all believers are equally favoured with a *triumphant* death; but that all have the same *hope*, the same *safety*, and when the

pang is over, the same *joy*. It is true, pain may deaden the outward sense of the privilege; and infirmity, either mental or bodily, may deprive them of the exercise of those faculties which would otherwise be the channels for communicating the comfort of it: but their state before God does not depend at death, nor did it ever depend in life, upon their frames and feelings. Their end is "peace."

How greatly would it tend to soften the aspect, and to mitigate the terrors of death, if we took this view of the subject in connection with the departure of *a righteous man*! We cry, in our lamentation over him, "He has been borne to the grave; he is gone to 'the house appointed for all living;' he is buried out of sight; he has said unto corruption, 'thou art my father,' and to the worm, 'thou art my sister, and my mother.'" But no: he has *not* been borne to the grave; it was not the believer himself that we carried there, wrapped in the shroud, and laid in the coffin; no, it was only the body of his

humiliation ; that body was only "the earthly house of his tabernacle," in which he dwelt for a time ; it was only the "casket" in which the "jewel" was kept for a season. As for *himself*, angels had taken charge of him ; and at the moment when we were mourning over the "earth," the "ashes," and the "dust," from which he had just been freed, he was in the "fiery chariot," on his way to the eternal mansion in the skies ; and instead of saying to corruption, "thou art my father," and to the worm, "thou art my mother ;" he is now saying to angels and archangels, "ye are my companions and friends ;" and to all the company of heaven, "ye are my sisters and my brethren." It is *your* privilege, believer, whosoever you are, thus to view your future condition. The eye of your faith may pass over the gloomy space which intervenes, the dark "valley of the shadow of death" which lies between this world and the glory which awaits you ; and you may contemplate that glory as if there were no death. St.

Paul was not favoured, as Elijah was, with a freedom from the common lot of all men ; yet Elijah himself could not take a more glorious view of the heavenly joy, even when the "fiery chariot" was waiting for him, than that apostle did, when he was "about to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand." He says, "Henceforth there is prepared for me"—what? a coffin, and a shroud, and a cold grave, and a devouring worm, and all the sad solemnities of death? No, he does not glance at what is to happen to the poor *body* ; he takes no account of the scene of sorrow below : but, passing all this by, he soars at once, by holy contemplation, into the realms of bliss ; and as if his translation to heaven were to be a *deathless* one, like Elijah's, he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ! Even so saith the Spirit." They need not such a departure as Elijah's, that they may share Elijah's glory. Their happy souls shall be minis-

tered to, as heirs of salvation ; they shall be "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

The description here given of Elijah's departure into heaven has so much of magnificence in it, that we cannot read it without thinking of the astonishing effect which the sight of it would have had upon our own minds, had we been spectators of the extraordinary event. To have witnessed the parting of the two prophets,—to have seen Elijah ascend the "fiery chariot" in which he was to mount up to the heavenly glory ! To have heard the noise of the whirlwind that surrounded him ! To have seen Elisha, with outstretched hands, catching the mantle as it fell, and crying, "My Father ! my Father ! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof !" How would our minds have been astonished and overcome by the amazing sight ! and yet methinks the most wonderful part of that glorious scene was not the extraordinary appearance of the "chariot and horses of fire" which appeared to Elijah, nor the

“whirlwind” which wafted him to heaven. There was something more surprising still belonging to the transaction, and that equally belongs to the departure of every believer from this world to the next, in whatsoever way it may please God to take him. The *most* astonishing matter for spiritual contemplation is, that one born, as Elijah was, in a fallen and corrupt state of nature, a sinner in the sight of God, should have been received into heaven *at all* ; that he should have been rendered “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light;” that such a work of grace and mercy should have been wrought upon his soul, as to render him pardoned, justified, and sanctified, and so accepted, before a just and holy God. *This* was the chief matter for wonder, and this exists to excite equal astonishment in the case of every departing saint. There is nothing, it is true, of *exterior* splendour in the dissolution of the poor frail body. Usually the sight is of a far different kind, —fearful, distressing, nay, sometimes offensive and appalling ; and yet, in truth,

when that decaying body is the tabernacle of a believing soul, the *separation* of them is attended with as much to wonder at and admire, as the *union* of them was when Elijah was translated into heaven. It is a spectacle of spiritual splendour and magnificence. It is a circumstance connected with "those things which the angels desire to look into,"—things which the highest archangel has not the capacity to comprehend.

But sublime and astonishing as this sight was, it does but seem as a faint and feeble emblem of another. Let me take you, in imagination, from the banks of Jordan to the foot of Mount Olivet. Observe what is passing there, as described by the evangelists. You see a small group of persons in conversation with one of mortal form like themselves, but of more than mortal dignity. He is wonderful to look at. He bears in his hands and feet the marks of a cruel and infamous death by *crucifixion*. With all these death-wounds about him, he is *alive*, and he is convincing those around him

that he is so, by addressing to them words of comfort. Presently he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing on them ; and while he is thus doing, he begins to rise in solemn majesty from the ground on which he has been standing, and gradually mounts into the air before them ; till, ascending into the clouds above, they lose sight of him, and can trace his flight no longer. What a scene is this ! If we had tried to conceive in our own minds something which, however unreal and imaginative, should be in the highest degree sublime and beautiful, could we have depicted anything like this ? But it is not unreal ; there is nothing imaginative in this. He whom we have directed you to look at thus, at the Mount of Olives, has actually been there. It is the ever-blessed Jesus himself, and those by whom you have thus seen him surrounded are his disciples. He did so bless them as I have described, and he did so ascend to heaven. And why did he so ascend ? For the same purpose that he was crucified, dead, and

buried. The degradation to which he submitted, and the exaltation to which he afterwards rose, both tended to the same great and glorious end, the salvation of the souls of men. Mark how this is set forth in prophecy, by David, in the 68th Psalm. "Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." I need not stop to prove that these words refer to the ascension of our Lord, because St. Paul has shown this in Ephesians iv. But extend the passage which thus practically depicts the very scene which we have been viewing; draw out its full meaning, and see how comprehensively it describes the purposes for which the Saviour rose:—"Thou hast ascended up on high." "Thou, O Christ, who didst descend from the right hand of the majesty in the heavens to the lower parts of the earth, art again ascended to thy glory. Thou hast conquered the conqueror, bound the "strong man armed," redeemed human

nature from the grave, and triumphantly carried it with thee to the throne of God. Thou hast received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, and all his gifts and graces, to bestow upon the sons of men, even upon such as have not only broken thy law, but appeared in arms against thee. Yea, of such as these, converted by the power of thy Gospel, wilt thou form and establish a church; that so, of thy faithful people, gathered from all parts of the world, may be built up a living temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit." These were the gracious and the glorious purposes for which he ascended. He is gone up to heaven to *receive* gifts, in order that he may *bestow* them, and bestow them on *us*. And how should it humble us to see depicted in the psalm our own sad character, while it points out to us our great privilege. When it is said, "Even for the *rebellious*," that is the word which describes *us*. The display of God's mercy is necessarily placed in humiliating connexion with the rebellion of fallen man:

“To the Lord our God belong *mercies* and *forgivenesses*, though we have *rebelled* against him.” But let us not lose the privilege. Let us ask for what the Saviour has promised; let us beseech him to give us what he has ascended to bestow. Remember the supplication of Elisha to the ascending Elijah, for “a double portion of his spirit.” The departing prophet had said to his disciple, “Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away.” May I not say, that it is in similar language that the ascended Saviour now addresses *his* disciples: “Ask what I shall do for thee.” We want much; let us ask largely. We want *pardon*, and he has ascended to procure it for us. We want *grace* for the future, even when pardon has been granted for the past; and this he can continually bestow. We want *sanctification*,—that increasing meetness for heaven which all his people have; and it is the result of the outpouring of the Spirit, that “Comforter” which he promised to his church. Thus the prayer of Elisha may well be

ours, for a large, a double portion of the Spirit. And while we ask for the Spirit, let us not forget that there is a "mantle" for us too, a better than Elijah's which fell on Elisha ;—one which is given by the ascended Jesus to all who receive his Spirit. It is the spotless robe of his own *righteousness* ; it is "unto and upon all them that believe ;" it is the portion of all them that are sanctified ; it is their *justification* unto eternal life. When Elijah first cast his mantle upon the junior prophet, as we read in a former chapter, the Spirit of the Lord went with it, and constrained him to follow Elijah ; and now "a double portion" of the Spirit is given him, as he catches the mantle of his departing master. So, let it ever be remembered, the "mantle" of the Saviour's justifying righteousness, and the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, must always accompany each other ; for whom he justifieth, them he also sanctifieth.

I think, too, that we may trace here an emblem of the effects which are produced, at the parting hour,—I mean the hour of

death,—by the righteousness which is applied to the soul by faith, for justification. We read that when the two prophets came to Jordan, over which they were to pass, before Elijah was taken up to heaven, “he took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters; and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.” May I not remind you that when God takes his people to himself, *death* is the “Jordan” which they must pass through, before they ascend to glory. But they find the way through it to be safe; for Christ has, by his death, sanctified those waters, and with the mantle of his righteousness he has smitten and divided them; so that the ransomed of the Lord may pass over without danger, and without injury: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.”

Seeing then what a miracle of mercy the grace of God performs for the justified and sanctified man, when he is called away

by death, to enter heaven, I appeal to all who hear me, whether these "gifts for men," which the ascended Saviour has to bestow, are not such as we shall need when we die? and, if so, then whether they ought not to be asked for now? However we may now disregard these "gifts" of the righteousness which justifies, and the Spirit which sanctifies, we shall want them when we depart hence. We shall want the "mantle" of the justifying righteousness of our ascended Lord, to divide the waters of the Jordan of death for us, that we may pass safely over; for "being justified by faith, we have peace." And we shall want a double portion of his Spirit also, to make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light;" for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who have walked not after the flesh, but the "Spirit." These are the "gifts" which we want. The Saviour waits to bestow them. He says, "Ask what I shall do for thee."

To reject the offer, will be to appear without the "wedding garment" at the

“marriage supper.” To hear him say at last, “How camest thou in hither without a wedding garment?” This is to be “cast into outer darkness.”

There is a circumstance of a most awful nature connected with our Lord's ascension, which I must advert to before I conclude : it is his coming again to *judgment*. “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” said the angels to the wondering disciples. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” He will come not to *give gifts*, but to *take account* of what he has already given.

But O, who can tell the wonders of that morning, when the body of the believer shall wake from its peaceful slumber, and rise from its earthen couch ; when God shall call to the archangel, and bid him “blow ;” and when the sound of that trumpet shall wake the dead, and bring them all to judgment ? The mind is lost in the contemplation of such a subject.

We can conceive the “fiery chariot” carrying up Elijah into heaven, wonderful as the fact was; but to conceive the ascending of countless millions from their bursting graves, and the particular individual body of any believer seeking out, among the multitude, its own kindred spirit, and joining it again, like happy friends who meet to part no more; how difficult for finite intellect! Yet so it shall be, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Then it shall not grieve the believer that he was compelled to bow to the stroke of death, instead of rushing into glory as Elijah did; but all his faculties will be absorbed in admiration that he should find himself in glory at all. If sin now appear to you, believer, to be “exceedingly sinful;” what will it seem to you when you shall hear the sentence pronounced upon the wicked, and see them depart to their punishment! If the blood of Christ be now to you exceedingly precious; what will it appear when you shall see the glory to which it can exalt the Christian, and the bliss

which it has provided for him ! If the covenant of grace be now “ all your salvation, and all your desire ; ” what will it appear, when you shall see it in all its length and breadth, stretching itself into eternity ! All these wonders are yet to burst upon your astonished soul ; and there is no grace manifested to you, no mercy received by you, *now*, of which it may not be said, in reference to that day, “ Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

But our subject addresses, lastly, those of a contrary character ; and, in the language of affectionate admonition, seems to say to them, “ If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.” We do not show you to-day the terrors of the law, but the consolations of the gospel. We do not sound in your ears the awful words of wrath and judgment which will be pronounced against the wicked ; but we have led you, as it were, to the dying bed of the righteous, that you might see his peaceful end ; and to the tribunal before which he is to stand, that you may

look on him, and observe his "joy unspeakable and full of glory," because he is "accepted in the beloved," and "there is no condemnation for him." Let the sight of him, then, raise in your hearts a desire to follow him, as he follows Christ. Do not say, while you see his death-bed, "Let me die the death of the righteous," and then go away, and forget the scene altogether; but dwell upon it. Must not religion have something in it worth your seeking, if its effects are so blessed in him? Try to catch his mantle, and imitate his spirit. Ask, as a test of your own character and conduct, what would be your judgment respecting them if death were near. You will need both the "mantle" of imputed righteousness, and the "spirit" of imparted holiness, in order to give you "a good hope through grace" of enjoying "the inheritance of the saints in light." Remember, your only opportunity of securing these unspeakable blessings is *now*, just the passing day, the fleeting hour, the present moment: "Now is the accepted time, and

now is the day of salvation!" May God, in his mercy, excite a holy fear among you, lest a promise having been left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

SERMON VII.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER'S GOOD GIFT.

LUKE xi. 11.

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

OUR Lord is, in this chapter, teaching us two grand truths upon which the hope of the Christian may securely rest for peace and comfort. These truths have reference to the blessings of *salvation*. The first is, the necessity of asking, in order to receive them; and the second is, the certainty of receiving whenever we

ask for them : “ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened.”

Our text will afford us some subjects for profitable meditation ; and especially it will enable us to contemplate the all-important subject which this day * is brought before us, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in his blessed influences, for the enlightening, sanctifying, guiding, and comforting the Church and people of God.

We will take the points of instruction as they seem to lie before us in the text.

1st. We have our Lord's own assertion with regard to one of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel,—the *corruption of our nature* : he says, “ If ye then, *being evil*.” He does not mention it as something to be first declared, and then proved ; but as a matter already proved by experience, beyond the possibility of any doubt or gainsaying. And to whom is he saying this ? Not to the hostile Scribes and Pharisees ;—not to those whom he had

* Whitsunday.

at another time called a "generation of vipers," and to whom he had said, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He is here speaking to his own disciples, his followers, and his friends; and yet he speaks to them as "being *evil*." How then, can *we* escape from a charge thus comprehending *all* the fallen descendants of a fallen parent? Humiliating as the doctrine is, we are here made to see its truth, and to hear it from the lips of Jesus, the Judge, as well as the Saviour, of men. Let it teach us the necessity of the renewing influences of that blessed *Spirit*, the third Person in the glorious Trinity, to render us acceptable in the sight of God.

These observations may serve to throw light upon our next point.

2nd. Our Lord says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give *good gifts* unto your children." It is evident he means, by "good gifts," those things which, as parents, they thought to be "good" for them. For, alas! how sadly do many mis-

take in their estimate of "good gifts;" and how "evil" do they prove themselves to be, by selecting, as "good" for their children, those very things which are most hurtful and pernicious!—as our Lord suggests would be the case, if a stone were given them for bread, or a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg. And this is done from excessive and mistaken affection; from a desire to render their children either *great*, or *rich*, or *admired*; instead of their being *useful* in their generation, as becomes the professed servants of God. Nor is this all: it is to this misguided parental affection that we owe the painful results of indulgence in infancy, which leads to the destruction of sound principle in after life. It is to this, too, that we owe what leads away the soul from the paths of religion, and draws it down into the depths of worldly-mindedness, and at length into *perdition* and *destruction*. Oh, if the misguided parents could see the fearful results of giving to their children an education for this world

only, and shutting out all instruction and godly discipline as to the world to come ; they would perceive, that instead of giving *really* “good gifts” unto their children, they had been giving them “stones,” and “serpents,” and “scorpions;”—“stones,” which could never become food for their nourishment ; “serpents,” which would only bite them to death ; and “scorpions,” which would sting them throughout eternity.

A melancholy case of this kind came under my own notice, some years ago. A young person, whose education had been directed to the enjoyment of the “good things” of this world, and to the exclusion of the better things of the world to come, was stopt in her career by a sickness which terminated in death. Convictions came upon her mind then, which before had been kept away and suppressed. She saw not only her own folly and sin in having neglected the concerns of her soul, but the mistaken manner in which her over-fond parents had brought her up ; so

that what she had before considered tokens of their *affection* for her, now appeared to be actual *cruelty*. She was heard to say, as she lay a dying, "O cruel father! O cruel mother! you have never shown me the way to heaven; and now I am dying without knowing it." The poor distressed young creature found out, at that awful period, that the "good things" which her doting parents had provided for her, being only "things" of this world, had left her; and there remained nothing for her, in her last moments, but the "stone," and the "serpent," and the "scorpion."

3rd. Our text exhibits to us the eternal God, in a manner the most endearing and encouraging: "Your heavenly Father." Of all the names that He bears, this is the name by which we love most to approach Him. Those names which imply his majesty, dignity, and glory, would all keep us at a distance; but this brings us near. Other names "may fill us with awe and reverence, and others again with fear and trembling; but this is a name that invites

us to a confidence in his goodness and mercy, and to a love of his care and compassion towards us. It was, doubtless, on this account, that our Lord taught his disciples to address their prayers to God in that endearing character: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye,—Our Father which art in heaven!" and our church has been mindful to unite this lovely appellation to those which express the highest dignity, and the most glorious majesty of the Lord our God: "O Lord our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God!" We are thus reminded both of our *duty* and our *privilege*: it is our *duty* to remember that He whom, by gracious permission, we call "our heavenly Father," is "high and lifted up" beyond all our conceptions of power, and might, and majesty, and dominion, and therefore he is to be approached with humility and self-abasement: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of them that are round about him." But we see our *privilege*: although He is "the high

and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," yet He is our nearest and dearest Friend and Relative; though he is in heaven, he is our Father; and therefore we may come to Him with filial confidence and love; we may pour forth all our sorrows into his bosom; we may tell him all our complaints, infirmities, and our very *sins*. And we may take the consolation of believing, that if our "heavenly Father" is the "high and mighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords," then we have indeed a sure defence against all our adversaries, a strong Deliverer from all dangers and calamities, a powerful Guardian in troubles and sicknesses and sorrows,—One whose eye can always watch over us, and whose arm can always protect us; so that the *love* of our Father is continually shown to us in connexion with the *power* of our God.

But other thoughts must here arise in our minds. How did it come to pass, that this "high and holy One" should ever thus condescend to us? Whence do we derive the right to take that endearing name into

our lips,—our sinful and polluted lips? By what connecting link is it that God and man are so intimately bound together? In order to solve this difficulty, we must ask, *Who* is it that said, “After *this* manner pray ye?” *Who* is it that took upon him the authority to permit and enjoin us to address God as our Father? It was He who took our nature upon Him and joined it to the divine, in his own sacred person. It was He, of whom the eternal Father himself said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” He left the bosom of that Father, the throne which he shared with Him, and the heaven in which he dwelt with Him, in order to constitute between God and us,—the holy God and us sinners,—the sacred and endearing connexion of Father and children: “Forasmuch,” says St. Paul, “as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same.” “For,” says the same apostle, “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is

not ashamed to call them brethren." Hence we find him not only invested with our nature, but suffering in it unto *death*, "even the death of the *cross*."

That cross He endured,—the shame of it He despised,—and when He rose from the dead, He said, "Go, and tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." Here then is our *warrant*,—our *full* and *sufficient* warrant, for calling the Almighty and "everlasting God," our "heavenly Father."

But does not the mention of this endearing word remind us what *prodigal children* we have been? Does it not make us take shame to ourselves, that we should have left our Father's house, where there was "bread enough and to spare;" and should have been vainly trying to satisfy ourselves with "husks" or the "stone," or "serpent," or "scorpion?" And ought it not to lead us to inquire whether we have been made sensible of our sin, and desirous of returning? Should we not ask ourselves, whether we are the "children of

God" in a higher and better sense than as being created by Him, or taking his sacred name upon us by a mere *external profession* of his holy religion, or a mere "outward and visible sign," without having sought by diligent prayer his "inward and spiritual grace?" O let us not deceive ourselves in this matter. If we would be indeed the blessed partakers of such privileges as God's *spiritual* "children" partake of, we must be "created anew in Christ Jesus, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost." We must give proof of this by a suitable life, character, and conversation; we must have the *feelings* and *dispositions* of his "children;" and we must show the *love* and *obedience* of his "children;" or we can enjoy no true and scriptural hope of possessing the *inheritance* of his "children." Contemplate the magnitude and the blessedness of that "inheritance," and then tell me what manner of persons those should be who are to possess it. "If children," says St. Paul, "then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." What an "inherit-

ance" is that! "Heirs of God,"—of the *promises* of God,—of the *glory* of God,—of all that is to be enjoyed from the *perfections* of God, and from what those perfections can bestow eternally upon a purified and glorified spirit in heaven! I say, contemplate that "inheritance;" and then say, what must they be, who shall be permitted to share it? Rather let the holy apostle tell us: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and "they have received the Spirit of *adoption* whereby they cry, Abba, Father."

4th. Our text shows us the Holy Spirit as *God's gift*, together with his *readiness* to bestow it. When it is said to be "*the gift of God*," as our blessed Lord has himself designated it in another place, we must understand it as distinguished from, and superior to, all *other* "gifts." The very term used is intended to show us what an inestimable value is stamped on it in heaven. It is, in fact, a "gift," without which every other blessing would be not only

unsatisfying, but absolutely useless ; and a “ gift ” which virtually comprehends every other blessing which we can possess.

Judge of the value of this “ gift,” when we tell you, that, without it, even the “ gift ” of *the Son of God*, called by the Apostle Paul, the “ *unspeakable* gift,” would have been altogether in vain. Does this language appear too strong ? You shall decide for yourselves, whether it be so or not. Tell me, to what purpose had the Lord Jesus given up himself to death for sinners, if there were not imparted to those sinners the power of discerning their *need* of that atonement, and of *applying* the benefit of it to themselves ? Whence is that power to be derived ? Does the sinner possess it in *himself* ? All experience, from the fall of Adam down to the present moment, has been loudly and constantly testifying,—“ man, as a sinner, never can *discern the disease* of his sin, and therefore, never will *apply the remedy*. He will never, of his own mind, submit to the humbling doctrines of the gospel. If, then, the sinner

cannot have that power within himself, and must necessarily look elsewhere for it; can he discover it any where but in God? Accordingly God the *Holy Spirit* undertakes this, by enlightening the mind, and awakening the conscience, and softening the heart, and subduing the will, and sanctifying the affections;—thus putting the sinner in a state and condition to receive the salvation wrought out by God the *Son*; taking of the things which are Christ's, and showing them to the sinner; while he opens the eyes of the sinner's understanding to see them, and to value them; and enables him to make them *his*, by a spiritual application of them to his soul.

Having thus stated this great doctrinal truth, let me say, that it is intended to be carried out into the *life* and *practice*. It has a *condemning* power in it, not only against those who dare to treat the doctrine as a speculation, instead of receiving it as the most practical of all truths; but against those who venture to admit it, as a part of their creed, yet virtually reject it, as

of no further use. To such a person we say, you are depriving yourself of the only means by which any "good thing" or any "gift" bestowed by "your heavenly Father," can be of any real benefit to you. Let that "gift," whatever it be, come to you unblest by the Holy Spirit, unsanctified by his gracious influence; and it shall prove to be nothing better than a "stone," or a "serpent," or a "scorpion."

It is on this account that we so earnestly intreat every one who hears us, to *pray* for this holy Spirit. Our text *condemns* also those who *ask not* for his divine influence; for it declares how ready God is to bestow it;—*so* ready, that even the most affectionate earthly parent is not so willing to give "good gifts" to his dearest and most beloved children. Who will take upon himself to question the justice of that condemnation, since it is the result of a man's being destitute of that Holy Spirit which God had promised to *give* him, if he would *ask* for it? And if throughout eternity he is made to mourn the want of that

which would have qualified him for the heavenly inheritance, whom can he blame but *himself*, for losing the "good thing" which the "heavenly Father" had offered him; and taking, in the stead of it, the "stone," and the "serpent," and the "scorpion?"

But if the *condemnation* is so *evident* from our text, on the one hand; see how *abundant* the *encouragement* is, on the other. There is more than at first appears. Mark the peculiar wording of our Lord's declaration:—"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit,"—to whom? We should have thought our Lord would have said,—*"to his children."* But had he stated it in this way, how grieved and wounded would many a poor sinner feel! He might say, "if that precious gift" is bestowed on his *children* only, then what am I to do? I dare not call myself a *child*; and therefore I must be sent "empty away." But not so! Our Lord alters the

words, that any one, whatever be his state and condition, may be assured that they include him. Our Lord does not say, "Your heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to his children" merely, but "to them that ask him." Here is a consolation for all who may be doubting or hesitating in their minds, as to their qualification for applying. To all such inquirers we say, go, and ask Him for his Holy Spirit. If you are conscious of never having yet joined his family by "the spirit of adoption," go and ask him for that Spirit; and his answer to your prayer will constitute you one of his family; the imparting of that Spirit will place you among his "children;" and you will be entitled to call him "Abba, Father." Do you want words for your prayer? Your church has afforded them in abundance:—"That it may please thee to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to *endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit*, to amend our lives according to thy holy word." Ask, and it shall

be given ;” for He giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask.”

And you, who have thus prayed, and have been thus “endued with the grace of the Holy Spirit,”—to you we say, “*Grow in grace!*” Make progress ! Go forward ! see to it that you do nothing to *grieve* that Holy Spirit. If He has enlightened your minds, and converted your hearts, He has done only a portion,—though essential to your salvation,—of that work in you and for you, which, by the everlasting covenant, he has pledged himself to perform. It is He that will increasingly sanctify you, and make you more and more “*meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ;*” it is He that will fulfil, in your happy experience, those words of St. Paul, “The Spirit itself *beareth witness* with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” And then, by thus “witnessing,” he will *comfort* you ; and his comfort is so great, that it is called “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” And lastly, He will put the

crowning blessing to all the rest, "*sealing* you to the day of redemption." We pray for you, that the Lord would defend you, as his children, with his heavenly grace, that you may continue his for ever, and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more, till you come to his everlasting kingdom.

SERMON VIII.

THE SILVER CORD, AND THE GOLDEN
BOWL.

ECCLES. xii. 6.

“Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.”

THE most striking expressions are used, and the most forcible images are employed, in scripture, to set the subject of death before us in the most affecting point of view; and perhaps there is nothing which proves more plainly the natural insensibility of the heart of man to things of the highest importance, than the unconcern which is shown upon this point in particular. The subject of death is continually pressing itself upon our atten-

tion. It is not a truth which lies concealed, and must be sought out, and brought to light; it is not a mystery of divine revelation, requiring the exercise of faith to receive; it is not a point to speculate upon, whether it may or may not come to pass: it is one of those common, plain, palpable truths which come home to every man's understanding; it presents itself incessantly to his notice; it shows itself to him, in some shape or other, all his life long: he is always hearing of it, always seeing it, and yet always *forgetting* it. He hears of it in the sound of the funeral bell, and in the accounts of the deaths of others, whether slow or sudden. He sees it in the graves which are opening every day, and in the coffins and the mourners which are passing continually by him—in short, all things in him and about him teach it, and preach it, and show it to him; and yet he will not “consider” it. Perhaps, indeed, if we take him to one of the dying beds which we visit, and show him some poor sufferer

passing through the agonies of death into the eternal world; he will pause for a moment, and shed a tear at the sight. But when we ask him afterwards how he is affected with the subject, we find that his heart has returned to its former hardness. He has not communed with his heart on the subject; he has his farm or his merchandize to go to for relief against the intrusion of such things as judgment and eternity. "The heart is deceitful above all things."

We cannot wonder, then, as this is the case, that the word of God should abound, as it does, with so many means or channels of conveying this solemn truth to the heart. The metaphors employed in this chapter are some of the most striking and beautiful in the scriptures; and that which forms the text, the most striking perhaps even of those. Solomon had long laboured under the treachery of his own heart upon this momentous subject; and he seems to have written the book of Ecclesiastes to confess it, for the humilia-

tion of himself, and for the benefit of all who should come after him. The whole book is a sermon upon this text—"Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" It is an account of his own experience of this truth. He traces all the course of instruction to this point, as "the beginning of wisdom:" "Remember *now* thy Creator, in the days of thy *youth*:" remember Him before sin carries its own punishment in this life;—"before the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them," Remember Him before *sickness* bring thee to see the *end* of these things;—"before the sun, and the moon, and the stars be darkened to thee." Remember Him before the *faculties* of thy *body* fail;—"before the keepers of the house (the head and hands) tremble, and the strong men (the legs) bow themselves, and the grinders (the teeth) cease because they are few, and those that look out at the windows (the eyes) be darkened, and (on account of deafness) all the daughters of music shall be brought low." Remember Him

before the *faculties* of thy *mind* give way, and all the impotence of second childhood come on thee;—"before the doors (of the understanding) be shut, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish:" a beautiful idea, describing the grey hairs of the hoary head of age, white as the blossoms of that tree: "and the grasshopper shall be a burden;"—the slightest thing become painful and irritating; "and desire shall cease;"—all relish and appetite fail! Solomon intimates, by these and other figures, the state of decrepit old age,—the state which Barzillai so feelingly described to David, when he said, "I am this day four score years old. Can thy servant taste any longer what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore, then, should thy servant be a burden unto my lord the king?" But the passage before us goes further. "Remember thy Creator, not only in the days of thy youth, not only before sickness, not only before

old age ;” but “remember him because all these will bring on *death* :” “before man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.”

Having finished the climax, the preacher enters upon a figurative description of death : “Remember him before the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel at the cistern.” Here we have a cluster of the most striking emblems which can affect the mind on that solemn subject. They describe all the functions of life by a well of water, and the vessels belonging to it, and the instruments used at it. There is a “bowl” or bucket, in which the water is contained ;” and a “cord” to it, by which to let it down. There is a “wheel,” by the turning of which the water is more easily drawn up ; there is a “cistern,” into which the water is poured ; and a “pitcher,” to carry it away. But here they are described as lying in a useless state : the “cord” is snapped

asunder, the "bowl" is broken in two, the "pitcher" is dashed to pieces, and the "wheel" can turn no longer. Examine these similes, and you will see how strikingly they point out the separation of soul and body at death. Then that bond of union is broken; and that "cord," which so wonderfully connected them together before, is parted asunder; the lungs can no longer play, and the heart ceases to beat, and the blood to circulate; and all the vessels and instruments of life, which communicated the blood from the heart to the extremities of the body, are broken or worn out. Have you not been struck with the aptness of this emblem, when you have been sitting by the side of the bed of sickness and death? Have you not seemed to hear, in the labouring breath of a dying friend, the "wheel" creaking as it turned? and has not the helpless state of the sick and aged shown you the "cord" worn as it were to a thread, and just ready to break, incapable of drawing life's water any more? And when you have perceived the hectic

flush of death, and the disordered pulse, and the last efforts ineffectually made to support expiring nature, you may have been reminded that the “pitcher” and the “bowl” were “breaking.”

There may be some additional emphasis intended, by calling the “cord” a *silver* cord, and the “bowl” a *golden* bowl: their preciousness, may be intended; or it may intimate that there is “no respect of persons” with death: not only Lazarus, but “the rich man also, died.” And therefore, though your “cord” be *silver*, it must be “loosed;” and if your “bowl” be *golden*, it must be “broken;” for “there is no respect of persons;” or, if it be dear to you as silver, and prized by you as gold, yet life must give place to death; and all the means of supporting life must give way, as insufficient for the purpose, in the day when God requires it of you. Thus far the metaphor. Observe now the following verse. It contains no metaphor, no emblem, nothing figurative, but words of simple, plain, and solemn truth. The preacher has carried

his reader, in imagination, to the grave by the most affecting similes he can devise ; but when he comes to speak of the awful realities of the eternal world beyond the grave, he says only, "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God that gave it." There he seems to keep his eye fixed, for some time, as if lost in the boundless extent of the idea ; there he would fix the attention of his reader, till the awful solemnity of the subject has properly affected him. Then he takes off his eyes, as it were, from that object ; and, casting them again upon the earth, he is struck with the contrast, and cries, "Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity !" "See the littleness of everything here below," he seems to say, "compared with that one grand subject, the appearance of the spirit before God who gave it. And whenever you are tempted to take up your rest in this world, where God has told you there is none ; whenever you are so deceived as to say to your soul, "I have much goods laid up for many years, let us eat, drink,

and be merry ;” whenever you are prompted to walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes ; Oh think of the warning voice of one, who said, “ Remember *now* thy Creator, or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel at the cistern.”

Having thus commented at large on the text, let me closely apply it. The wise man has here drawn, with a masterly hand, a picture of *death* and *judgment*,—the return of the body to the earth, and the return of the spirit to its God. I intreat you to look at it. Keep the eye of your mind fixed upon it ; and while you look at it, *think* ! “ There is a picture of myself ; an exact description of what I shall soon be.” Let the *young* look at the picture ; let the *aged* look at it ; let the *sick* and the healthy look at it. In order to render our subject as profitable as I can, I will address a few words of advice.

1st. To the sickly and aged.

2nd. To the healthy and young.

1st. To the *sickly* and *aged*.

With regard to the *sickly*, I mean chiefly those persons who bring their poor emaciated bodies into the house of God, while they are yet able ; in order, we would hope, to obtain for their precious souls something from the ministry of God's word, which will serve them for a *refuge* to flee to, when no other shelter will be found ; for a *rock* to stand on, when other supports must give way ; for a *physician* to consult, when others will be of no value ; for a *cordial* to revive the drooping spirits, when the flesh and heart begin to fail. Is it true that you come seeking this ? We hope in God it is so.

Surely it is no small comfort to us to tell you that "there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there ;" and our earnest desire is to bring you to a knowledge and an enjoyment of the salvation of the gospel of Christ, before you depart hence and are no more seen for ever. We see too plainly that the "silver cord" will soon be "loosed," and the "golden bowl broken,"

and that in a little time the waters of this life will fail you ; and, therefore, we wish to tell you, while you are able to hear us, that there are “ waters ” which never fail ; that there is “ a well springing up into eternal life ; ” that there is “ a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” We wish to cry in your ears, before they are closed in death, “ Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ! ” and we engage, on behalf of our Lord, that those of you who, by grace, accept the invitation, shall be able, when the vessels of this life are actually breaking, and “ can hold no water,” to find all your fresh springs are in Him. In short, we direct you to look at *Him*, as the dying Israelites looked at the brazen serpent in the wilderness, when there was no other remedy for their wounds. Look at Him on the cross, where He was lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent ; and then smite on your breasts, in repentance, as they did who saw Him there, when they returned from “ that sight.” What comfort will it afford your ministers, to find your dying beds made

easy to you,—not by a self-righteous hope,—not by a blind ignorance of the first principles of the gospel,—not by a peace which it is too frequently our pain to witness, and our duty to disturb; but by the presence of your Saviour there; by the sweet enjoyment of his pardoning love; and by a “hope full of immortality,” a “good hope through grace,” a “hope” for which you may be able to “give a reason, with meekness and fear;” a “hope” built upon repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that love of holiness which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

And, though we would never address the aged without remembering what is due to “the hoary head,” yet, as “ambassadors for Christ,” we must not pass them by, but speak to them, in humility and affection, the words of eternal life.

We know too well, from experience, that “the hoary head” is not always “a crown of glory,” because not always “found in the way of righteousness.”

What a dreadful object is the man who, during a long life, has been only "treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" and now stands tottering on the brink of eternity, ready to fall, not only into the pit of the grave, but into the bottomless pit of destruction! O turn to the strong hold, prisoner of hope! See the greatness of that salvation which for so many years you have neglected. It must be great indeed to reach a case like yours. And yet it can reach you. There is an arm stretched out to save you. It is that arm which might have struck you to the nethermost hell, twenty, thirty, forty years ago. You are yet upon praying ground. Time is not yet quite gone, though it is "the eleventh hour." The "silver cord" is not quite "loosed," though it is worn away to a thread; the "golden bowl" is not quite "broken," though you yourself begin to feel how little water it can hold. We cannot look at you without following you, in imagination, from the

church to your bed, and from your bed to your grave, and from your grave to the judgment-seat of Christ. O, give us the delightful task of following you from thence, in thought, to the full possession of eternal joys, in the heavenly mansions above.

But, are there not some aged *saints* among us,—some whose privilege it is to have enjoyed, for a long season, the comforts and supports which only Christ can give? Oh, it should refresh and animate us all, to witness the grace which shines in the life and character of an *old* believer. To hear him testify to the truth of his Saviour's promise, "Even to your old age I am He, and to hoar hairs I will carry you;" to perceive him familiar with the thoughts of death, and well acquainted with the comforts which the prospect of heaven affords; to behold him standing on the brink of eternity, looking back with thankfulness on the "wilderness" which he has passed, and forward with joy to the "Canaan" which is before him; to hear him

say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day;"—this should refresh and animate us all. Blessed are the aged who can testify these things, for to them "the bitterness of death is passed." Let the angel thrust in his sharp sickle and reap, for the harvest is ripe; and the aged believer is ready to fall "as a shock of corn in its season."

Lastly, I address a few words to the *healthy* and the *young*. Some of them, perhaps, say, "Why address *us*? The subject is suited to the sick and the aged, and you do well to direct their attention to it; but there is nothing in it which applies to *us*. Preach to us some truths which may serve to be a guide to us through *life*; tell us of some precepts which we may carry with us, to show us the way to escape the snares of the world which is before us." Is the world then before you? Is life before you? Have you "made a covenant with the grave?" Are you "in

agreement with death?" If not, then, however strong and vigorous you may now be, it is right to tell you, that *death* and the *grave* are before you. If we prepare you for *them*, we prepare you for *life*; because those will walk most securely and most happily through this world, who are best prepared for the next. We do, indeed, include every precept which can be useful to you, every lesson which can instruct you, and every caution which can put you on your guard against temptation in *life*, when we endeavour to prepare you for *death*. If it be well with you in respect of that, then *all* is well. Keep this in mind when you are tempted to sin. Ask yourself, Should I think so lightly of the matter, if the "silver cord" was about to be "loosed," and the "golden bowl" to be "broken?" If not, then how shall I *now* do that great "wickedness, and sin against God!"

Do not suppose, dear young friends, that your ministers wish to rob you of your comforts, by setting these things before

you. No, we wish to be "helpers of your joy;" we wish to see you happy, really happy; we wish to give you peace, real peace. I say *real* peace, because there is a happiness which Solomon speaks of, wherein "the heart is made sorrowful," and the "end of that joy is heaviness;" and there is a peace which the world gives, in order to lull the soul into an insensibility which is the forerunner of eternal death. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you. Acquaint yourselves now with Him, and you will be at peace. Come unto Him, and He will give you rest. Devote yourselves to his service. Have you health? Give it unto the Lord: it is a talent which he will one day require with usury. Have you *strength*? Devote it to his service: he asks it of you, and you will not have it long to use. Can you give a good account of your *time*? time, precious gift! How do you spend it? What portion of it do you give to *God*? You can count over so many hours in eating and drinking, but where is *God's* portion? so many hours

in sleep and amusement, but where is *God's* portion? so many hours in business or study, but where is *God's* portion? Remember, he will one day ask you for it; and "the unprofitable servant" will not go unpunished. What time do you spend in prayer, in reading the bible, in going about doing good? Who is the better for your pious instruction, or your edifying example? Who, among your fellow-creatures, has been helped by you to a knowledge of salvation, among all the poor and ignorant around you?

In what respect is the cause of God promoted by you? Never say you can do nothing to assist in promoting the religion of Christ. It is not possible for you to be so circumstanced as not to make yourself useful. So long as there are any who are poor or sick or ignorant or wicked at home, you may be useful to them in visiting, relieving, and instructing. So long as there are souls in need of the knowledge of salvation in heathen countries abroad, you may be useful in forwarding to them

books and teachers, by which that great object may be accomplished. Are these things dear to you? Do you feel an interest in them? Do you remember them in your daily prayers? Do you regard them in your daily walk through life? If not, let me tell you, the word of God puts a question to you which, perhaps, your consciences will find it difficult to answer, "How dwelleth the love of God in you?" Remember, I beseech you, two texts, in connexion with our present subject. They will tend to impress on your minds, by God's blessing, the admonitions just given. The first of these texts is from the pen of the same wise man who wrote that on which I have been already commenting: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." The other is from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ—a greater than Solomon is here: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no

drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not : for verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

SERMON IX.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE WORLD'S
WISDOM.

1 COR. i. 20.

“Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.”

THE state of the celebrated city of Corinth, particularly at the time when St. Paul wrote his epistles, would furnish much matter for our contemplation, if we had time to dwell upon it. I will only observe, by way of introduction to our subject, that the inhabitants of Corinth were raised to the highest degree of celebrity among their neighbours, on account of their trade and commerce, their wealth

and learning, their attainments in arts and sciences. Amidst all this greatness and superiority, however, one thing was wanting, and that was the "one thing needful." They *knew not God*. The great men, and the wise men, and the learned men, all discovered the grossest ignorance upon the subject which most concerned them : not a man in Corinth, among all the orators, all the philosophers, all the moralists, could find an answer to this question—"What must I do to be saved?" And it is to be observed too, what an awful effect the want of this divine knowledge had upon them *as a city*. Corinth was not more known for its learning and opulence, than for its profligacy and wickedness ; affording a proof that, however a city or nation may be famous on account of the splendour to which it may attain, yet the grace of God must appear, before the inhabitants will "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." This "grace of God" the apostle preached

to that corrupt people, and the preaching of it in this case, as in every other, was followed by the happiest effects: a church was collected together, separated from the abominations which surrounded them, and taught to worship the true God. To this church the epistle is addressed—"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, unto the *Church* which is at Corinth;" and, as if he would magnify, even in the address of his epistle, that grace which had brought them out of the low degraded state of sin into which Corinth was sunk, he says, "to them which are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus." "Who shall limit the grace of God, when even the Corinthians were sanctified by it?"

The preceding verses, however, show much infirmity in those to whom he wrote, even though making a profession of the Gospel. There was a tendency to party spirit. One was of Paul, and another of Apollos; ranking themselves rather under the name of some particular teacher, as they had before been accus-

tomed to do when learning of their philosophers, than under the banner of the cross itself.

Wherever this Corinthian spirit prevails, it tends to sap the vitality of real religion, to produce jealousies, and envyings, and evil surmisings among Christians. Ministers of Christ, whose pure and unmixed motive is the love of Christ, seek not to aggrandize themselves, but to exalt their master; seek not to be lords over the faith of their hearers, but helpers of their joy; seek not the admiration, but the salvation of their people. Their aim is not to proselyte men to themselves as leaders of sects and parties, but to bring them to Christ. And when they see the mistake of young converts, in honouring the instruments of good to them, instead of God who is the cause, the author, the giver of the increase, they feel a holy indignation at it, as Paul and Barnabas did, when the people at Lystra would have done sacrifice to them: they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, "Sirs, why

do ye these things? for we are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities, and serve the living God."

What is it but worshipping and offering sacrifice to the creature instead of the Creator, when one says, "I am of Paul, and will hear no other minister;" and "I am of Apollos, and can only listen to him;" and "I am of Cephas, for there is none like him." The experienced and humbled believer says, "I am of *Christ*; I call none but him 'Master' upon earth; and all the ministers of my Lord who testify freely and fully of the grace which is in Him, are estimable in my eyes, as "ministers by whom we are edified, even as the Lord giveth to every man."

These observations, however, certainly admit of some qualification. We cannot wonder to see a peculiar attachment manifested, in the hearer of the gospel, to that minister whom God has been pleased to make the instrument of his first turning from his evil way to seek the Lord.

There is a sacred association formed in such a person's mind, which I cannot think the Apostle himself would have wished to do away in the Corinthians. Whenever such a person reflects upon the blessings which he has enjoyed since he has known "the truth as it is in Jesus," he insensibly connects with the idea the channel through which, and the instrument by which, those blessings flowed to him. Adverting to the house of God which he has frequented, he says, "What reason I have to love *that* especially ! All places are to be loved and desired in which God's honour dwelleth, and in which his word is faithfully preached ; but *that* has been not only "the house of God," but "the gate of heaven" to me ; *there* God's word was not only preached but blessed to me. Surely I have reason to praise God, who brought me to that place, where I have been made "to know Him whom to know is life eternal !" And so of the minister under whose preaching God has been pleased to bless the word of His grace :

he may say, "Though there are many whom I esteem for their work's sake, yet *this* was the instrument employed for *my* benefit; he is my spiritual father; and the peculiar affection and attachment which I feel for him, is that of a child for its parent." St. Paul speaks to this effect himself, in the 4th chapter of this epistle,—"Though ye have ten thousand instructors, yet have ye not many fathers; for, in Christ Jesus, *I* have begotten you, through the gospel." Putting, then, these two declarations of St. Paul together, we may I think conclude, that though he reprobates that spirit of party which shows a carnal mind and an itching ear; he would by no means check that holy affection, or interfere with that sacred bond of christian fellowship, which exists between the edified hearer and the minister by whom he is edified.

The words of St. Paul which precede the text, seem to put aside all the vanity of that frivolous and contentious spirit which had shown itself, by ascribing all

the power to God. The preaching of the cross is "foolishness," if unaccompanied by the divine power; preach it who will; but, to them who are saved, through the faithful reception of it into their hearts, it is the power of God, even if His *meanest* servant advocate the cause, depending simply on that power only. For, whether man depend upon the preacher, or the preacher on himself, this truth shall be made known, "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

We will consider—

1st. The extensive import of the apostle's question.

2nd. The humiliating tendency of the truth which follows it.

1st. "Where is the wise?"

Where is the *philosopher* who affects to think this plain simple gospel truth beneath him; who supposes he has attained to all the knowledge which is to be acquired, or which need be attained for any

purpose? Where is the man who tells us he will believe nothing which he cannot understand; who thus sets aside the necessity of a divine revelation, and practically denies the influence of the Spirit to be at all needful? Let him know, that those to whom the preaching of the cross is “foolishness,” are those that “*perish*.” Where is the *scribe*, the interpreter of the law, the man who has been looked up to as an oracle to declare the council and will of God? “Has he, by searching there, found out God? hath he found out the Almighty to perfection?” No; after all his attempts, “it is higher than heaven; what can he know? it is deeper than hell; what can he do?” The manner in which an offended God can be reconciled to fallen man, without any diminution of his holiness, or any jarring of his attributes, is what “the scribe” is so perplexed to unravel by the efforts of his own mind, that, in order to get rid of the perplexity, he is compelled to say, “It is foolishness”—that is, it must be folly, be-

cause he cannot comprehend it. Mark the vanity of that "worm of the earth!" The "*angels* themselves desire to look into these things, and are not able;" and shall "man that is born of a woman" do it? "shall mortal man be more just than God? shall man be more wise than his Maker?" "Where is the *disputer* of this world,"—the man who presumptuously cavils and objects and argues upon points of doctrine, which are to be humbly received, because God has declared them, and not to be disputed about because they are mysterious? Where is he? and, after all, *what* is he? "What art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, "why hast thou made me thus?" All his cavils, and his objections to the plain simple plan of salvation, laid down by God himself, cannot change the mind of God, nor alter the course which He has resolved to take, nor do away that which He has sworn to accomplish, by the gathering in of His people, and the saving of them with an everlasting salvation.

While the cavilling disputer of this world is arguing, and hesitating whether the gate of heaven *can* be opened in such a way as the gospel describes; the plain way-faring Christian, who staggers not in unbelief, but is strong in faith, giving glory to God for such a display of mercy and grace, enters into the joy of his Lord, and is happy for ever.

“Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer?” Let them come forth from the schools where they have taught their philosophy, from the senate where they have displayed their eloquence, where they have shown their powers of mind upon all other subjects. However we may honour great talents, or high attainments, in any matters of human acquirement; yet, if we find those talents put in the place of God the Holy Ghost, if we perceive them to be made the miserable substitutes for the teaching of the Spirit; then we say, that all their learning shall be of no effect, and all their talents displayed to no purpose, so long as it is written,

“ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Before we pass on to the next head, let me make use of the apostle's expression, to enforce an affectionate remonstrance.

“ *Where* is the disputer of this world ? ” Is he *here* ? Is there such a character in this congregation ? If there be, we do not profess to meet him with any wisdom of *our own*. We use no other weapon than that which the apostle did. We only preach the same doctrine, relying upon the power of the same God to apply it to his heart and conscience, for his salvation. But we would ask the “ disputer,” Where are you, if such a chapter as this be really the word of God's truth ? Are you not at an infinite distance from the comfort and peace of mind which the reception of that truth would give you ? Are you not far off from a state of favour and acceptance with God, who has declared that He holds in abomination every high thought, which exalts itself against the knowledge of Him, and the obedience of Christ ? and if so, then

we ask “the wise and the scribe and the disputer,” where *will* they be, in the day when the great men, and the mighty men, depending on their own wisdom, shall all be brought low, and God alone be exalted? when He shall come to be glorified only in his *Saints*, and admired only in all them that *believe*? “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” where shall the *scoffer* and the *despiser* appear? where shall the *rebel* against “the truth as it is in Jesus” appear? “Beware, lest that come upon you, which was spoken by the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!” Oh, “kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way; if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

We are now to notice,

2nd. The humiliating tendency of the truth, which follows,—“It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.”

To illustrate the apostle's meaning in this place, let me refer you to the next chapter. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God:" "For, the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are *foolishness* unto him; neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned."

This is St. Paul's own explanation of the expression which he uses in the text, "The foolishness of preaching:"—foolishness to him who is "wise in his own eyes;" to him who is "wise above what is written;" to him who has not been made, by the Spirit of God, "wise unto salvation."

We need not trace back the experience of past ages, to show this; nor need we quote the objections of the Scribes and Pharisees against the preaching of Christ and his apostles, either to prove, on the one hand, that in *their* mouths it was counted "foolishness;" or to show, on the other, that it was "salvation" to all that believed it, as at Corinth. See its effects *now* on those who believe it; and see the opinion which is *now* formed of it by the carnal and profane. Look at the effects of the doctrine of salvation, by faith in a crucified Redeemer, as it is preached in your own day, your own country, your own church. What has it done for us as a *nation*? It has lifted us up above all other nations, and made us a praise in the earth. It has preserved us from the calamities which have visited others; and not only so, but has made us a blessing to others. Has not the Lord said to this country, "I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing?" and why? because of her arts and sciences, her trade and commerce, her wealth and

learning? No; but because God has been in the midst of her; because, as the ark of the Lord was the hope and confidence of Israel, so has that Saviour, of whom the ark was the type, been the hope and confidence of our country; because, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so has the Son of man been lifted up, the crucified Redeemer been exalted among us, that we may look to him for salvation. And so long as our pulpits resound with that name which is above every name, the name of Jesus; so long as we have priests clothed with righteousness, and a people who lift up holy hands and renewed hearts at the throne of the heavenly grace; we will not fear the attacks of any open enemy from without, or of any secret enemy from within. They shall all hear the voice of God, in his providence, saying, as he did to Balaam, "Thou shalt not curse that people, for they are blessed."

What has this preaching done for us as *individuals*? "Foolish" as it may be deemed by many, it has *saved* every soul

alive that has *believed* it. Ask any Christian, who is really such, whether among high or low, rich or poor, (for God is no respecter of persons, and the work of grace is the same on all,) ask him what it is that lifts him up above the present state of things, and enables him to look beyond the grave with peace. He will tell you, that the secret lies in his having simply believed the declaration of God, in his word, respecting salvation. "I heard that there was a 'fountain opened for sin and uncleanness;' I felt that I needed it; I washed, and was healed. And when I began to perceive that I was spiritually *blind*, and that only Jesus could open the eyes of my understanding, I besought Him, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on me.' Instead of cavilling at the way in which it was done, I bless God that it was done at all. And however I may be deemed devoid of that 'wisdom' which would scrutinize and investigate the hidden ways of God; *one* thing I know, and that is quite sufficient for me, that whereas I was *blind*, now I *see*."

A word of solemn warning must now be addressed, in conclusion, to a character which too frequently escapes us, when we are treating on such a subject as this. I mean the man who, because he does not openly oppose the doctrine of the gospel, thinks that he has received it, and believed it, and therefore is saved by it. To him we say, what if your daily practice is contradicting your religious profession, and showing that, in fact, your not opposing the truth is merely because you are indifferent whether it be truth or not! Remember, that though you may never have persecuted Christ, like Herod; nor betrayed Him, like Judas; nor crucified Him, like Pilate; you may have been a Gallio, "caring for none of these things;" or a Felix, trembling, and yet stifling conviction; or, like Agrippa, you may say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," without ever being one altogether. In short, you may be sheltering yourself under the plea that you object to nothing which we preach, and at the same time

show that the most violent opposers and “disputers of this world” are not further from the kingdom of heaven than yourself.

Can any condition, then, be more awful than yours? Oh, be not satisfied to remain in it for another moment. Hasten to Him who has declared that He will “save them that believe.” Humble yourself before Him, and learn of Him; for He is “meek and lowly of heart,” and you shall find rest unto your soul;—not the “rest” of torpor and sluggishness; not the “rest” of indifference and unconcern; but the “rest” which sweetly calms and comforts the soul, when Christ is made unto it “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

SERMON X.

THE BELIEVER'S EXPECTATION AND END.

PROVERBS xxiii. 18.

“ Surely there is an end ; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.”

THERE is a beautiful connexion between our text and the preceding verse. Solomon is exhorting the righteous man to hold on his way, without casting any envious glances towards the prosperity of the wicked. He encourages him to look forward to the close of all things earthly, when the eternal doom of each shall be fixed ; when it shall be seen who has been the wise man, and who has been the foolish ; who will be the happy man, and who will

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be the miserable. He says, "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: for surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off." The text, thus opened, will put before us these two points, as connected with the character of the man who "fears the Lord:"

1st. His present "expectation."

2nd. His future "end."

The application which I propose to make of the subject will, I hope, help us to answer a momentous question, as to what right and title *we* may respectively have to the character addressed in the text.

1st. His present "expectation."

What, then, is his "expectation?" Where does it rest? on what is it fixed? from whence is it to be fulfilled? who shall realize it, and gratify him by its accomplishment?

Whatever answer is to be given to these questions, one thing is very plain,—that such a person's "expectation" can have

but little to do with this world and the things of it. It is true, the servant of God “expects” that his heavenly Master will give him just as much of the things of this world as will be needful for him, and just as much as will really do him good. But he knows how hollow, how unsatisfying, how polluted, and therefore how pernicious, are many of those things which constitute the world’s *best gifts*. He knows with what caution they are to be received; and how far he should be from resting his “expectation” of any real essential good upon such a ground as that. He can enjoy the sanctified use of what God is pleased to give him in this world; but as it respects his soul, and things which make for the peace of the soul, and things which accompany the salvation of the soul, they are not to be obtained from such a world as this; and therefore he does not rest his “expectation” upon it. In so thinking and acting, he differs from most of those around him. Solomon intimates this when he says, “*Thine expectation*

shall *not* be cut off:" as if he had said, "The expectation of those of an *opposite* character *shall* be cut off." Indeed, he says expressly, in another place, "The expectation of the wicked shall perish." The believer, therefore, turns away from all those things which are merely *carnal*; and he says to his soul what David did, "My soul, wait thou only upon *God*, for my expectation is from *Him*."

See how beautifully the determination of the believer, and the declaration of God, harmonize and correspond with each other! The believer's determination is, to fix his "expectation" on God; and God's declaration is, that it "shall not be cut off." And now that we are about to show *what* the believer expects from his God, you will judge how amazingly large and comprehensive his "expectation is;" and what abounding love and mercy are manifested by God, in the fulfilment of that "expectation." To put this into the smallest compass, we may say, that the Believer "expects" the full and entire possession

of *all* that God has *promised* to his people, in his *word*.

1st. The believer expects to be permitted to stand before God, at last, in a state of *complete pardon and forgiveness*. In other words, he enjoys the blessed persuasion, that all his sins will be entirely blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, and cast out of sight ; so that when they are sought for, in the great day, they shall not be found. Not a single transgression will stand against him, to bring him into condemnation ; nor will any past violation of the law be suffered to call down wrath and judgment on him. St. Paul has given the very words which the believer shall be then permitted to use : " Who shall lay anything to my charge ? " And the reason which he shall give for being so graciously and mercifully dealt with will be this, " It is Christ that died." The preciousness of the blood-shedding of his Saviour shall be then recognized in the presence of God, and angels, and men ; the value of it, and the power of it, and

the saving efficacy of it, shall be found then to be such, that all shall acknowledge it, while they wonder and adore. "It is Christ that died!" God has "seen the blood" on the believer's heart and conscience; He well knows that only his *Holy Spirit* could have so applied it; that no other instrument but saving *faith* could have been used to do it; and that no heart or conscience would that Holy Spirit have touched with it, but a heart previously melted to *repentance*, and a conscience already softened and subdued by the same divine influence. He "sees the blood;" He pardons the sinner; He raises the penitent; and He says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

This is a part of the believer's "expectation;" and, large as it is, his God has declared that it "shall not be cut off."

2nd. The believer expects *more* than this. He looks not only for a manifestation of his Lord's pardon through the sufferings and death of Christ, but of his *justification* through the spotless *righteousness*

of Christ. He expects to appear before God in judgment, not merely as a criminal deserving death, and pardoned by the mercy of his judge; but as one who never had incurred the penalty, because his release is procured by a *perfect fulfilment of God's holy law*, in every jot and tittle. It will be acknowledged, in that day, that the righteousness which the Saviour so wrought out for the believer, was imputed to him for justification, at the same moment when the blood of Christ was applied to him for pardon. See this set forth by our Lord, in the affecting parable of the penitent publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" cries the poor contrite man: he prays for *pardon*. But more than pardon is granted; for what says our Lord? "I say unto you, that this man went down to his house *justified*." He is not only delivered from the punishment of sin, but dealt with as if he had never sinned. How valuable will that twofold imputation appear, when the penitent believer shall stand before the bar of God,—the imputa-

tion of the sinner's guilt to the Saviour; and the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness to the sinner! It is this that shall place him nearer to the throne of glory in heaven than even the angels who never sinned; for they appear in *their own* righteousness, which is that of *God's creatures*; but the righteousness in which the justified believer is to stand, is the righteousness of *God himself*. Hence St. Paul's prayer, "that I may be found in him," that is, in Christ; "not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith."

This, then, is another part of the believer's "expectation;" and his God has declared, that it "shall not be cut off."

3rd. He expects even more than this. He will be received into the heavenly mansion, not only as a sinner pardoned, and a believer justified, but as *a child of God*. When St. Paul is declaring the highest privileges of believers in Christ, he

rises to a beautiful climax, which he closes by showing that the most tender and endearing of all terms, implying connexion and relationship, are not too strong to set forth the unspeakable blessedness of those who love and fear the Lord. He is not content with saying, they are "fellow-citizens with the saints;" but he goes further, and says, they are "of the household of God." He goes further still, and says, they are "children" in that household;—further still,—that they are "heirs" of the heavenly inheritance: "if children, then heirs;" and, as if to show how high and how blessed the condition is which that word implies, he says, "heirs of *God* and joint-heirs with *Christ*." In the preceding verses he explains how this blessed condition is reached and obtained: "As many as are led by *the Spirit of God*, they are *the sons of God*. For ye have not received the spirit of *bondage* again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of *adoption*, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!"

As I illustrated the state of *justification* by a reference to the parable of the penitent *publican*, I may do the same with regard to the *sonship* of the believer, by directing you to the parable of the penitent *prodigal*. The prayer of the poor forlorn wretch, on his return home, was, to have the *pardon* of his offence confirmed to him, by being permitted to remain in the house, "as one of the hired servants;" hoping to enjoy the consciousness that, though degraded, he was *pardoned*. But this was not all that the tender father granted: "Bring hither the *best robe*, and put it on him; and put a *ring* on his finger." Here are tokens of something *more* than pardon. He wears the *robe* and the *ring*, to show that he is now a man of *dignity*, and one in *favour*. His condition is that of one *justified* from all charges of his former base conduct, and to be respected as if he had never been guilty of it. But there is a degree of favour even beyond *this*. The tender father clasps the destitute creature in his arms; he falls on his neck; he *kisses* him,

and calls him "*son*." This is more to him than the *robe*, even though it is the *best* robe ; more to him than the *ring*, even though that ring entitles him to the respect of all who are about him. And the sweetest sound that he hears is, when the father calls on the attendants to "kill the fatted calf," and says, "This my *son*," not "my *servant*," was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found."

Now, the "expectation," of a Believer in Christ reaches up to this highest point : it looks forward to the final and eternal enjoyment of a mansion in *his father's* house, according to the unfailing promise made by the Saviour to his disciples : "In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you ; that where I am, there you may be also :"—"I ascend to my father, and your father ; to my God, and your God."

This, then, is another part of the "expectation of the believer ; and he enjoys the assurance of his God, that it "shall not be cut off." How can it ? It is assured

by the everlasting covenant, it is confirmed by the counsel and the oath of the Almighty, in order that the believer may have "strong consolation."

Meanwhile there is going on within him the gradual and gracious work of the Holy Spirit, to *sanctify* him, and to make him *fit* for the enjoyment of all this blessedness. Without this process of preparation for the heavenly "inheritance," he could have no ground for his "expectation" of it, nor could he have any taste for its enjoyments if possessed. It is as needful that he should be prepared for the enjoyments, as that the enjoyments should be reserved for him; and therefore, in order that his "expectation" may not be "cut off," the *sanctification* of the Holy Ghost is *imparted* to him, while the *righteousness* of Christ is *imputed* to him;—the one being his *title to*, and the other his *meetness for*, "the inheritance of the saints in light."

We come now to consider,

2nd. His future *end*.

"Surely there is an end."

These words are evidently intended to refer as much to the ungodly as to the righteous. "There shall be *an end* to the prosperity of the wicked," says Solomon to the righteous man, "therefore do not envy them." And there seem to be implied the various trials and sorrows to which the people of God are exposed, and through which they must pass, in their way to the heavenly glory. "There will be *an end* to thine afflictions, O servant of God," says Solomon, "and therefore bear them patiently." So that the prosperity of the wicked has "an end" that is to be *dreaded*; and the affliction of the godly has "an end" that is to be *desired*. And how much that "end" is to be desired by the one, and dreaded by the other, may be conjectured by the marginal reading of the word: it is there translated "reward." Perhaps the declaration of the prophet Isaiah will rightly give the whole meaning of the passage: "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him; for he shall eat the fruit of his doings. Woe unto the

wicked ! It shall be ill with him ; for the *reward* of his hands shall be given him." Can anything more distinctly point out the difference between the two characters, as to their present " expectation," and their future state ? How appalling these words, when addressed to the *worldly-minded and impenitent* ! " Surely there is an *end*." Have you considered it ? Do you believe it ? Are you expecting it ? The answer is, " Yes : it cannot be doubted ; to pretend disbelief in a matter so plain and obvious would be the height of folly. We expect it, as all others do." What ! expect it, and not *prepare* for it ? Believe it, and yet live as if it was a *fable* ? How is this ? Has it been revealed to you, that although the " end " shall surely come, yet it shall not come till you call for it ; or that it shall stay till you have reached a far distant period of life,—so far distant, that it is not needful to think about it *now* ? or that when it comes, it will only be a peaceful messenger to take you to a state of happiness which you never sought for,

never desired, never had any taste or inclination for, because it was a happiness connected with *holiness*? Is *this* your “expectation?” Does the Bible sanction it? Does it not, on the contrary, declare that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord?” And is not this saying, in other words, “Without holiness no man shall be *happy*?” What is happiness upon earth, but the favour of a reconciled God? and what is happiness in heaven, but the sight of that God in his glory? When the word of God, then, declares, “Surely there is an end;” and that when the “end cometh,” there shall be a “reward” to every man according to his works; it tells us what the “reward” shall be to such as I have described. And if nothing more were said concerning it than our text implies, it would be sufficient to make the most frivolous and careless to stand aghast at its meaning: “His expectation shall be *cut off*.” All his fancied prospects blighted, all his vain hopes disappointed, all his visions of false happiness driven away, and

every avenue to enjoyment shut up in darkness and obscurity! "His expectation *cut off!*" torn away from his grasp, and "cut" from his heart's affections! "Cut off" at the very time when most wanted for comfort; when the flesh and the heart are failing; and when a good hope, and a fair prospect, and a well-founded "expectation" would be of more value than at any other period of existence! To lose it *then!* To lose it *irrecoverably!* To lose it *for ever!* And to feel that it has been lost by his own folly, his own sin, and his own shame! While the word of God cries in his ears, "Surely *there is* an end;" and the flaming world around him cries, "The end is *come*;" and conscience within him cries, "*What wilt thou do* in the end thereof?"

But how do these words, so full of terror and alarm to the *ungodly*—how do they affect the *believer*? "Surely there is an end." To *him* the assurance is the main source of all his joy.

The "end," whenever it comes, will be an end of his conflicts with sin and Satan;

an end of the fears and doubts with which his great enemy has been always striving to harass and distress him; an end of his sufferings and sorrows, his pains and sicknesses, his troubles and adversities, which have pressed heavily upon him, though they have been sanctified to him. And the end of all these earthly things will be the beginning of all heavenly things to him. There will, it is true, be an end of all his *sabbaths*,—those blessed opportunities of worshipping God in his own house, which have been such a source of comfort to him; but he will exchange them for the full enjoyment of that heavenly sabbath which shall never end, and in which he will worship his God without sin and without distraction. There will be an end even of *prayer*,—that great privilege of hallowed communication with the Almighty, by means of which he brought down into his very heart the presence and the blessing of an indwelling God. But the end of prayer will be the beginning of praise,—praise such as he never before could offer, and never could

even conceive;—praise in the immediate effulgence of that glory which surrounds the throne of the triune Jehovah,—praise mingled with that of angels and arch-angels, the cherubim and seraphim which stand before the holy God,—praise which will be continually flowing from his lips throughout eternity, and will constitute the “new song” which none but the redeemed can sing, and which they will sing *for ever*.

Surely then, dear brethren, those who witness the “end” of a man, when it is such as this, may say to all around,

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright! for the *end* of that man is *peace!*” May *we* thus “mark the holy character, the happy life, the blessed departure, and the glorious immortality, of the believer in Jesus. And while we adore the grace which made him what we have seen him to be, may our hearts put forth this prayer for a participation in his heavenly “inheritance:” — “Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my *last end* be like his!”

SERMON XI.

THE FIELD OF THE SLOTHFUL.

PROV. xxiv. 30—34.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and, Lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction. ‘Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep!’ So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

THERE is so close a resemblance between the world of nature and the world of grace, such a striking analogy between things temporal and things spiritual, that frequently we may derive advantage from tracing it with a view to self-application. Our Lord seems to have taken every opportunity of instruction in this way. in

order that the lesson might be more easily understood by his disciples. This is the sort of instruction which may be derived from my text.

It will be a happy circumstance for any of us, when we shall retire from the contemplation of it to-day, to be able to say, with Solomon, "I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction."

We have three points to consider :—

1st. The state of the "field" and "vineyard."

2nd. The character of the "owner" of them.

3rd. The consequences which were to be expected from both.

1st. The state of the "field" and "vineyard." "It was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Now it would be easy to convince any man, that a field in such a state as this would bring its owner to poverty; and if our instruction were merely

of a temporal nature, showing that the neglect of a man's worldly concerns would reduce him to ruin, how readily would a congregation assent to it ! All would allow that the calamity was brought on him by *himself* ; and all would think that the conduct which he had shown was *folly* in the extreme. Besides, to how few would the text apply ! How general would be the exculpation ! No man's conscience wounded ! All blameless comparatively in the matter of attending to their " fields," and " vineyards," and " stone walls ;" I mean, all proving themselves active as to things pertaining to *this life*, and in those concerns which regard their own *temporal* welfare ! But the minister of the gospel does not stand up in the pulpit to tell his people that they must " rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," that they may accumulate wealth, and establish their families in the world, and push forward their temporal interests. All this is done, in general, without any need of an exhortation. There is no ne-

cessity for any other stimulus to care and exertion, in matters of this kind, than what a man's own natural inclination furnishes. The truth of the apostle's words is practically exhibited to us every day, "All men seek their own,"—their own interests and advantage.

There is another "field," and another "vineyard," which a man has to attend to, and which he is sadly prone to neglect: I mean the "field" of his *corrupt heart*, and the "vineyard" of his *immortal soul*. Oh, what an awful difference too frequently exists between the care bestowed upon the field, and the vineyard, and the farm, and the merchandize, and the counting-house, on the one hand; and the everlasting concerns of the *heart*, of which it is said, "Keep it, for out of it are the issues of life;" and of the *soul*, of which it is said, "What shall a man give in exchange for it!" Here, then, we come at the lesson which Solomon teaches—"See it, and consider it well," he says, "Look upon it, and receive instruction."

How does a man act, in order to get the proper fruits from his field or vineyard? The answer will furnish us with instruction respecting our spiritual state. How did the "Well-beloved," of whom the prophet Isaiah speaks, act with regard to the "vineyard" of which he sings? "My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein;" and, having taken all these pains, "he looked that it should bring forth grapes." Contrast that description of a vineyard well cultivated, with this in the text, of one neglected; "It was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Christian! which of these two descriptions is suited to *your* case? Look at the "field" of your *heart*, and the "vineyard" of your *soul*, and "receive instruction." Have you gathered out the "*stones*," and plucked up

the "thorns and nettles?" The heart, in its natural state, is like a field or vineyard uncultivated. It is called in scripture a "stony heart;" and while in this state, the "fruits of righteousness" will never grow there. Take away the "stones" thereof, if they have never been removed. Pray to Him who has given this promise, "I will take away the stone out of your heart." Then pluck up the "thorns," which our Lord calls "the cares, and the deceits, and the lusts of the things of this world," which "choke the good seed of the kingdom," and "whose end is to be burnt;" and tear away the "nettles" of unbelief, and pride, and impenitence, and anger, and envy, and malice, and all those evil passions and dispositions which prevent the soul from "growing in grace;" because, as the text speaks, they have "covered the face of the ground." Have you *planted* the field and vineyard? It is not enough that the husbandman takes away what is hurtful; he is to plant what is good. Have you sought for those

goodly plants which grow only in a soil graciously cultivated? There are *heavenly graces*, which the apostle describes as the effects of the Spirit's influence, growing up in the heart which is renewed, and distinguishing it by its fruits, just as the well-cultivated and fruitful vineyard is distinguished from the surrounding wilderness. He says, they are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance, meekness, faith, patience and charity."

But we may put all these questions into one, and ask you, is "the choicest vine" planted in the vineyard of your heart? "I am the true vine," saith the Saviour, and if Christ, that "plant of renown," be rooted and grounded there, then indeed may be expected all the goodly fruits of faith and holiness; not those "grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah," fair to look at, but bitter to the taste; not those "wild grapes" of self-righteousness which are fit only for the dunghill; but the fruits of genuine repentance and vital faith, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and

glory of God. Ask of Him who "giveth his *Holy Spirit* to them that ask." He will send down from above his *rain*, "the early and the latter rain," and water your "field" and "vineyard." He will command the winds of heaven to blow sweetly on it. It is an important, as well as beautiful prayer, which the church puts up, in "Canticles," for the influences of the Holy Spirit: "Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south! and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; that my beloved may come in, and eat his pleasant fruits."

There is another point from which we may derive instruction. The "field" and "vineyard" which Solomon saw had not only the "thorns and briars" growing in it, but "the stone wall thereof was broken down." In the description just given of the well-kept vineyard, it is said, "He fenced it" from thieves and robbers, as well as from the wild beasts of the forest; for to what purpose would it be planted, if it was not protected? Does not this

suggest to us, that if we would keep our hearts, if we would secure our good hopes, if we would prevent Satan and his emissaries from making inroads upon our souls, and stealing away our spiritual enjoyments, we must be on our guard; we must determine, by the help of God, to live wholly to Him. Such hallowed purposes, such sacred resolutions, will be like a thick hedge or a "stone wall," round about the "vineyard" of our souls. I do not mean resolutions made in our own strength, nor purposes, however holy, entered into in dependence upon our own power, to perform them. The "stone wall" would soon be "broken down," if this were the case, and "the wild beast of the forest" would destroy all. I mean resolutions which are the result of prayer for divine grace. These will always be found a barrier against Satan. The watchfulness which follows prayer is the "hedge" of the soul against temptation, and a "wall" against every enemy that would rob us of our salvation.

O ye that would protect your "fields," and guard your "vineyards!" Ye that would keep the world, the flesh, and the devil, from destroying your souls! set this "hedge" round about you, and build up this "stone wall." Do it as Joshua did, when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" Do it as David did, when he cried, "Away from me, ye wicked! I will keep the commandments of my God!" When the heart makes such resolutions as these, looking to the divine strength, according to the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," we know what will always be the result. The Christian's "vineyard" will be secure. Satan, that "roaring lion," may "walk about" it, and try to spoil the fruits thereof; but he shall not be able to enter. All the comfort of that promise will be felt, "I the Lord do keep it, I will watch it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." And, in order to show the incessant care and watchfulness of Jehovah, it is said, "He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

Round this vineyard He has built the "wall" of his everlasting *covenant*. That protects them from the assaults of his enemies and theirs. *Sin* cannot prevail against them, nor *death*, nor the gates of *hell*. The wall of the covenant is cemented with the blood of the Redeemer; that blood was shed in love to them; that love is, like Himself, eternal; and therefore, of all who by repentance and faith are enclosed in it, as his vineyard, he says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

We come to consider,

2nd. The character of the owner.

He is called "slothful" and "void of understanding;" and while his "field" and "vineyard" are in this wretched condition, he is described as saying, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep!"

Here you find sloth and folly united: the "slothful man" is called a "man void of understanding." It is the case in worldly matters: how much more in spi-

ritual! This slothful man professes and calls himself a Christian. He has an immortal soul, and a charge to keep and cultivate that soul. In a little time it will be in the eternal world. That eternal world will be happy or miserable, according to the attention he gives to the concerns of his soul during the present life. But so it is, that though he knows all this, he does not act as though he had any knowledge at all of the matter. His sloth will show itself in the manner of excusing himself from any exertion after eternal life. He will plead for a *little* indulgence. You observe, the man in the text does not say he is determined to sleep on, let what will be the consequence, even if his "field" and "vineyard" go to ruin. He asks for "a *little* sleep:" he says, "I do intend to care about my soul, and that very soon. A *little* sleep, and then I will arise, and pluck up the thorns and nettles; a *little* slumber, and then I will go, and dig, and plough, and sow; a *little* folding the hands to sleep,

and then I will repair the hedge, and build up the stone wall. This is of all deceptions that which will most assuredly bring a man to eternal ruin : he falls by *little* and *little*. The state of his soul is getting every day worse and worse. *Time* is passing away, without waiting for him to awake from his delusion. *Death* is hastening upon him. The *Judgment* is coming after. All the wrath of eternal punishment is ready to be poured out of the vials of the Almighty. And there lies the poor deluded wretch, like the sluggard on his bed, sleeping the sleep of death, or drowsily desiring more self-indulgence, while he shuts his eyes against the terrors that are coming on him. O for a spirit of conviction from the living God, to awaken such a soul ! O for some alarming providence, some sharp affliction, some tremendous exhibition of the power and presence of Jehovah in the earth, some word of the Lord “ sharper than any two-edged sword,” that shall rouse him from his lethargy, by showing him the nearness

of eternity, and his want of preparation for it! *Then* how different will be his language! We shall not hear him say, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep!" but he will say, "Yet a little time for repentance, a little time for preparation, a little time for stretching out my hands in prayer; that I may obtain mercy, and find grace, before I depart hence, and am no more seen for ever!"

Never think of a "more convenient season" than the present, for repentance and turning to God. Felix, the Roman governor, did so, and it never came; nor will it ever come to you. *Death* will come, *Judgment* will come, the happiness and misery of *Eternity* will come; but "a more convenient season" will *never* come. The language of the Bible is, "*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation! *To-day*, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts! *To-day*, while it is called to-day; for the night cometh." "Therefore whatsoever thy hand findeth

to do, do it with all thy might ; ” — very different from “ folding the hands to sleep ! ” “ because it cannot be done in the grave, whither thou art going.” What an argument is this ! Use it with those who would tell you that you may be too earnest in religion. Use it with those who are in a state of sloth themselves. Use it in communing with your own heart, and in applying to it your Lord’s words, “ Be ye also ready.”

When David was about to build a temple for Jehovah, he did not say, “ The time is not yet come to build ; ” but he said, “ Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor climb up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids ; till I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” And if David made this anxious and earnest determination, when he was only preparing an earthly building for the Lord, what should be the anxiety of him who has to seek for a place at the right hand of God,

in the kingdom of his glory? What sleep should he give to his eyes, and what slumber to his eyelids, till he can say that, through grace, he has a good hope, that “when this earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, he shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!”

Our last point will require but few words of explanation.

3rd. The consequences which are to be expected from the slothful man's neglect, are thus described: “So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” As sloth ruins a man in temporal concerns, so it does in spiritual; and I know not that any two words could better describe the miserable state of a soul that is without Christ: “Poverty”—and “want.” Oh, who can describe the dreadful condition which these words imply! In want of a Saviour! In want of the blood of atonement! In want of the Mediator between a sin-avenging God and a poor guilty sinner! What a *bankrupt* state of soul! He

owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay. Justice is about to take him by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest;" and he is in want of one to undertake it for him. He is in want of that which may blot out the debt from the "book of remembrance." Tell me if this is not "poverty" indeed! His ruin takes him, after all, by surprise. It comes before it was thought of. It has been gradually approaching, surely approaching, though imperceptibly approaching. It comes "as one that travelleth;" and when it comes, it prevails over its victim "like an armed man:" no escape, no resistance, no hope! Think you not that he looks back upon his past slothfulness and want of understanding with bitter regret? Then, by all the bitterness of that regret, we implore the "slothful" among you to awake in time, and to examine the state of their souls. But the ruin of which we have been speaking as "one that travelleth" often approaches *swiftly*. If the "sluggard" could see this "armed man" travelling

towards him, deriving speed from the *shortness of life*, and urged on by some *fatal disease* or *fearful accident*, it would appear like the travelling of Jehu the son of Nimshi; or rather, shall I say, like the travelling which I spoke of last Sunday, when alluding to the dreadful disaster which has lately hurried so many into eternity.* How little was it thought that *Death* was in our train, and that the “armed man” was “travelling” with us, and would seize on some among us, and soon show how desperate is the state of those whose “want” is the want of a *Saviour*, and whose “poverty” is the lack of *divine grace*! The note of alarm, which sounded when our danger was discovered, would have awakened the most “slothful.” No one thought of “a little sleep and a little slumber.” There was no “folding of the hands to sleep.” All was

* Alluding to a sermon which the author preached, and afterwards published, on the occasion of a fatal accident which happened to the express train on the Great Western Railway, May 10th, 1848.

wakefulness, watchfulness, and intense anxiety. There was but a step between us and death ; and that "step" was to be *taken*. None knew by *whom*. Each was saying, "Is it *I* !" A few moments showed *who* it was that should be snatched away, and who it was that should be spared. In those few moments the matter of life and death was decided. Some were left to journey on here a little longer ; and others were dismissed to that land whence no traveller returns.

O, then, let us up and be doing. "*Work* out your own salvation," says the apostle ; but, for our comfort and encouragement, he says, "It is *God* that worketh in you to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." We know therefore *where* to go for help, and strength, and grace ; and we know that if we go, we shall not be sent empty away. What an inference, then, we are compelled to draw ! If this "poverty" afflicts us, we have brought it upon ourselves. If this "want" distresses us, we have invited it. If this "armed man" assails us, we have

opened our very doors to receive him. And while the gospel *freedom* was sounded in our ears, we have preferred the *debt* which we could not pay, and the *dungeon* from which there is no escape. But take now another view of the subject. If destruction is "poverty" what is *salvation*? "The unsearchable *riches* of Christ:" "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich:" "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things!" Here is the "pearl of great price!" Here is the "fine gold" of heaven itself! "I counsel thee to buy it of me," says the Saviour, "that thou mayest be rich." Does the sluggard's "poverty" come "as one that travelleth?" So do the believer's *riches*. They are "the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints;" and He that bestows them says, "Surely I come quickly." Yes, he is hastening on, as the prophet intimates: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, *travelling* in the greatness of his strength?" The answer is, "I that speak

in righteousness, mighty to save!" He comes as a mighty conqueror, in his triumphant chariot, to burst asunder the prison-doors of sin, and to bring his people to his own heavenly abode. He comes "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." It is on this account that his people can say, as the period of his coming approaches, "Now is our *salvation* nearer than when we first believed." I will only add, that if *we* are among them, we shall hail his approach, as *our* Saviour, and Redeemer, and Friend, saying, "This is *our* God! We have waited for him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

SERMON XII.

THE WORLD'S PAGEANT.

I COR. vii. 29—31.

“ But this I say, brethren, that the time is short ; . . .
 for the fashion of this world passeth
 away.”

OUR time on earth is wisely divided into various portions. The division of it into *weeks* brings the sabbaths, which mark that division, so frequently round, that we pass from one week to another almost insensibly. But the division of it into *years* has something peculiarly and awfully impressive belonging to it. A man will, at the close of the old year, or at the opening of the new, make a pause ; he will put some questions to himself ; he will look

round him, to see who have survived the ravages which death has made, during the last twelve months, among his relatives and acquaintance; and who have been taken off by sickness or accident, and carried to "the house appointed for all living." And while he is meditating on these things, he may be led to ask himself, how the all-important matter stands between God and his own soul;—whether, if he shall this year be "brought to the dust of death," he has a good hope of happiness beyond the grave.

It is to assist us in such inquiries, that I avail myself of the present season,* to offer a few remarks on the solemn truths contained in the text. May God accompany the attempt with his blessing; that the careless may be alarmed, the lingering hastened, the wavering confirmed, and the believer encouraged.

1st. "The time is short." It is easy to reply, "we know it." It is true, that this

* New Year's Day.

declaration involves no difficult point in divinity, no theological controversy ; it requires no depth of research to discover it, and no fund of learning or wisdom to comprehend it ; and yet it is astonishing how much it requires of that learning which is divine, of that wisdom which is from above, of that research which has all the depths of the word of God, and all the windings of the human heart for its exercise, to *act* upon it. A man may "understand all mysteries and all knowledge ;" and yet his daily life and conduct may prove to the most common observer, that he has not attained to any *practical* knowledge of the simple truth contained in these three words, "Time is short." Efforts are continually made to bring man to a practical understanding of this truth ! We carry our dead to the grave in the most public manner for the purpose of teaching it ; the mourners, who "go about the streets," when "man goeth to his long home," proclaim it ; we open the grave, and bid him look into it, that he may learn

this truth; we sound the funeral knell, that he may lay it to heart; and if to these circumstances we add the *times* and *seasons*, oh, how continually does he hear it! The recurrence of his sabbaths, the festivals of his church, the returns of his birth-day, the close of the old year, and the opening of the new year, have this text written on them, "Time is short." Is it possible, then, to be ignorant of it? I answer, that, as to any *practical* understanding of the truth, men may live a long life, with all these monitors and teachers sounding the words in their ears the whole time; and yet the minister may find them on their death-beds at last, without giving any reason to believe that this truth has ever been really impressed on their minds. "*We know*," say they, "that the time is short, and that eternity is at hand; we *know* that death and judgment, heaven and hell, are following quick upon the present passing scene." *Do* you know these things? So did the old world know that the flood would come, that it would sweep away all who were

found out of the ark ; I say they knew this, because God had said it, Noah had preached it, and the ark which he made was before their eyes. Every plank as it was laid on, every blow of the axe and the hammer which was struck in the rearing of it, must have preached the solemn truth to them : how could they but have known it ? Mark, however, the extraordinary expression which our Lord uses, in his awful description of that tremendous judgment : “ They eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, and *knew not* until the flood came and swept them all away.” The knowledge was without conviction, or any practical effect, and therefore it was as if they *knew not*.

Practically to know that “ the time is short,” is to prepare for the eternity which is to follow. The disobedient servant, in the parable, *knew* that his lord would come home from his journey ; and that he would have to open unto him, either at even-tide, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; yet, instead

of watching, he said, "My Lord delayeth his coming." The consequence was, that the master came at a time when he thought not of it, and at a time when he was not aware, and cut him asunder.

The "foolish virgins" *knew* that the "bridegroom" would come, and that they would be required to meet him; yet when the midnight cry was made, they were found without oil in their vessels, and their lamps had gone out. The consequence was, that when they sought to enter in, "the door was shut." Just so, the careless Christian knows as if he knew *not* that "the time is short," that the graves are ready for him, that this year he may die, that this night his soul may be required of him; for none of these things have so affected his mind hitherto, as to warn him to "flee from the wrath to come," and to "lay hold on eternal life."

From all that has been said on this clause of our text it is evident, that even the plainest and simplest of those things which stand connected with salvation,

must be taught us by *the Spirit of God*, before we can understand them aright. Not only is the influence of that Holy Teacher necessary to show us the mystery of revelation, and the wonderful scheme of redemption, in all its parts and bearings; but it is necessary also to enable us to *act* upon such a truth as this, "The time is short."

2nd. We proceed now to the other grand truth which is here stated—"The fashion of this world passeth away."

The word here rendered "Fashion" is one which, in the original, signifies either the *scene* which is exhibited in a drama, or a *pageant*, a *procession*, which passes along the street. In both of these senses it affords instruction. "The *scene* of this world passeth away." The actors in the world's drama sustain various characters; and the images, forms, or representations which compose it, are shifting and changing perpetually; and after a short exhibition of the "scene," the curtain drops, and they are heard of no more. Death

stands, as it were, behind the scene ; waits till the hour is up, till the word is given to close the representation ; and then he loosens the cords of life, and touches the springs ; and the great dark curtain falls, and hides the scene for ever. In vain we look for the busy actors : the “ fashion ” is passed away, the “ scene ” is changed, —oh how changed ! All the gaiety of life changed for the dulness of the grave ; all the bustling activity of it, for the silence of the coffin ; all the gay and lively “ fashion ” of attire, in which the various parts were acted, is changed for the winding-sheet ; and all the scope of earth on which, as on a stage, the performers trod, is changed for the narrow limits of the tomb—“ The fashion of this world passeth away.”

But if we adopt the other idea, we shall find it equally instructive : “ the *pageant* of this world passeth away.” The world is a mere *procession*, a passing *show*, or *pageant*. Look into the history of the world at large, or of any nation in particular ; and mark how all is past and gone. The

battles of warriors, the triumphs of conquerors, the crowning of kings, the overthrow of empires,—what have all these been but a grand pageant passing along! *Now* it is gone by, it is out of sight; and we are compelled to ask the records of history what it was, and when, and where, and how it passed along, and what attention it excited, and who they were that gazed upon it as it passed, and with breathless curiosity pressed to see what now is mingled with the dust we tread on, and “blotted from the things that be.” The “pageant” is gone by: successive parts of this long procession have passed, from age to age, and have given place to the pageants of successive generations,—other parts of the same “show.” They, in their turn, are all gone by; and now another succeeds, another “pageant” follows, and still it moves along; and soon *all* will be passed and gone. How striking, in this sense, are the words of the psalmist: “Surely every man walketh in a *vain show*; surely he is disquieted in vain.”

The conclusion to which David comes is equally affecting: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? truly my hope is in Thee:"—as if he had said, "What is there in this passing show to satisfy my soul? It will soon be gone by, and I am passing away myself. What wait I for? I wait only till the little remainder of life be spent, till the few days or months or years allotted to me are expired. Others may be waiting till the silver is amassed, and the gold heaped together, for the purpose of entering upon more display in life, and exhibiting a more gaudy pageant as they pass along; but I am waiting till "the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken, and the pitcher be broken at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern;" and then "the body shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to the God that gave it." But my hope is, that I shall then be admitted to joys which deserve the name,—joys which shall have nothing of *pageantry* in them, no character of a short-lived passing *show* belonging to

them ; but all stamped with that glorious attribute of the everlasting God who confers them,—“ for ever and ever.”

Oh, there is too much of an *Athenian* spirit about us. We are asking each other “ who will shew us any good,” as the “ pageant ” passes. While precious time is flying, we are inquiring after “ some new thing ;” lingering after a vanity, when we should be pressing after the prize ; doating upon a favourite scheme for self-gratification, when we should be breaking the fetters of earthly-mindedness asunder, and casting its cords from us.

There would be more weanedness from the world in us, and more of a proper elevation of soul above its vanities, if our minds dwelt more upon two extraordinary facts connected with our subject: the first is one which has taken place, and the other is not yet come.

There was a time when *the Son of God* himself came down from heaven, mingled in the “ pageant,” and walked in the “ procession.” *Then* indeed a sight was ex-

hibited worthy of observation. Well might the eyes of men have turned away from all the pomps and vanities of the world's display, to look upon the *God-man-mediator* ! Yet who *did* turn aside to mark and contemplate Him as the Son of God, while He passed along ? Except in some instances, when it is said, " He could not be hid," He passed in the world's " pageant " unnoticed and unknown ;—they " knew not that it was Jesus." But He left us an example that we should walk in his steps ; and therefore we may ask, how did *He* regard the *world* when He was in it ; and what estimation did *He* make of the time which He passed upon earth ? To Him the world was but a " vale of tears," and time but an opportunity of " doing the works of Him that sent Him." He stopt not to gaze upon the vanities of the world ; He knew that it was all " vexation of spirit," and He wept at it.

As He went, He taught. And what truth did He ever utter, what parable did He ever speak, what precept did He ever en-

force, or what injunction did He ever lay down, which did not savour of the great doctrine we are now pressing upon your attention? Oh, let the Christian trace the progress of his suffering Master through all his earthly course, till he is brought in imagination to the awful close of it upon the cross; and while he looks upon the Saviour there, made a spectacle for that world to gaze at, for whose salvation He suffered; let the Christian learn the vanity of all things here below, the emptiness of the passing "pageant," the utter insignificance of all that moves in "procession" here before him; and let him say, "I am crucified with Christ; yea, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

There is another fact, to which I would call the Christian's attention: let him look forward to the time when another *scene* shall present itself, another *pageant* shall be exhibited, and *another procession* shall move along: a scene such as St.

John beheld, when "the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them, that they might be judged every man according to their works." To this St. Paul alludes when he says, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." Ah, what a pageant will that be, when we shall see "the great white throne, and Him that sits thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth shall flee away," and when the books shall be opened for judgment! and what a "procession" of souls to the bar of God, of generations to the judgment-seat of Christ, of worlds to receive there according to the things done in the body! Then it shall indeed be known that "the fashion of this world passeth away:" the very form and shape and materials of it shall pass away; yea, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the ele-

ments shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Oh, ye that gaze with admiration on the passing pageant of the world! look at the *end* of it, as it is here described. How does it affect you? Is there no "vanity" in it now, think you, and will there be no "vexation of spirit" in it at last? Yes, the most frivolous will then be convinced of this truth without the preacher's argument, and the most worldly-minded will then perceive the matter clearly by its own resistless evidence:—I say resistless evidence; for how shall man be ignorant of the solemn truth, when he hears it in the noise of the racking of the elements, and reads it by the light of a burning world? The argument of the apostle is this: "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the day of God!"

I will only add, that, standing as we

do on the borders of the eternal world, these thoughts are suited to our circumstances. What are they? We meet in the very place where those once met who heard these truths, and are gone to prove and witness them: they sat in these pews, and heard the preacher cry, "Time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away;" and now their time is no more, and they themselves are "passed away." Did any of them disregard the warning? they are gone to *answer* for it. Did any receive it, and act upon it? they are gone to prove how blessed those are in the next world, who by the ministry of God's word were "made wise unto salvation" in this. Again, we who occupy their places in the house of God, shall soon follow: this year some of us may die; and our empty seats be filled by others, while our bodies are occupying the coffin and the grave. "Time is short," and we are "passing away." This thought is the more affecting, because of the mutually responsible state in which we stand as ministers and

people. We who preach must hasten to tell our congregations of their sins and their Saviour, for "the time is short;" and when death takes us from the pulpit to the grave, we can save no more souls, can point no more immortal spirits to the cross of Christ, nor show them the way of life. All things around the minister seem to say, "What thou doest do quickly." We beseech you, therefore, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and by all the tremendous realities of the eternal world which we have set before you, cast off "the old man" with *the old year*; and with *the new year*, put on "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness:"—that death may have no sting; that the grave may have no terrors; that the judgment-seat may have no condemnation; that we may not dread to think of those things which appal the minds of so many, but "*love His appearing.*" This is *possible*. Many of you know it, and feel it. Yes; they to whom Christ is precious, and sin hateful;

they who have found pardon, through repentance, by the merits and bloodshedding of Christ; they who are living to the glory of God, a life of faith and holiness;—these may enter upon the new year, saying, “Whether I live or die, I am the Lord’s.” Death shall but make the year of their departure a “year of jubilee,” a “sabbatical year.” These are the minister’s joy and crown: “for, what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

SERMON XIII.

CHARACTER OF HEROD THE TETRARCH.

MARK vi. 25.

And she came in straightway, with haste, unto the king, and asked saying, "I will that thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist."

OF all the characters noticed in the Bible, none are so distinguished for opposite qualities as that of Herod, referred to in the text: it is full of *inconsistencies* and *contradictions*.

We are told that "in many things he observed John," and often "heard him gladly." Yet he was living at that very time, in a state of open profligacy. While he was hearing John, he appeared to take pleasure in religion; yet he showed, on

his birth-day, what delight he could take in the pomps and vanities, the sins and vices, of this wicked world. At one moment, we find him pleased with the most childish gratification ; at another time, he is " sorry," when tempted to do evil. The pleasure leads him astray, and the sorrow does not bring him back. He spared the holy Baptist, in the first instance, because of his fear of the multitude ; but he killed him afterwards, because of his wicked oath. He complied with a cruel request, through fear of offending the infamous Herodias ; and he was guilty of murder, out of respect to the drunken revellers with whom he was surrounded.

Such was Herod :—an awful example to many, who are " halting between two opinions!" To go some part of the way in religion, and then to stand still ; to have a reverence for the gospel and them that preach it faithfully, and yet to live in sin ; to think that hearing the truth, and approving of it, is a sufficient offset to ungodliness and wrong—all this is an aw-

ful delusion of Satan, by which he assaults and ruins the souls of men. Thus he assaulted, and thus he ruined Herod.

In order that we may derive instruction from this narrative, let us notice—

1st. The terrors of Herod's accusing conscience. No sooner does Herod hear of Jesus than he trembles. Why? Herod had a secret dread of some vengeance to be taken on him, for killing the prophet of the Lord; and therefore strange imaginations haunt him, and he thinks John is come himself to take vengeance:—"This is John the Baptist; I beheaded him; he did nothing to merit it; God is about to visit me for my crime, and to make the Baptist himself the instrument of my punishment." Who can tell the horrors that Herod suffered? and how dreadfully increased must they have been by the remembrance that the man whom he had killed, and whom he now supposed to be raised from the dead, was the only man who had tried to convert him from the error of his way, and to save his soul alive!

We see, even *here on earth*, what are the terrors of an accusing conscience ; but in *the world of spirits* what must they be ! *There* it is “ the worm that dieth not.” Oh, the value of *that* which can appease its anguish, and calm its terrors, and make it quiet and at rest ! My dear brethren, what shall do it ? Not the pleasures of the banquet. Belshazzar had them in all their perfection at Babylon. But in the midst of those pleasures came forth the fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote upon the plaiser of the wall, “ Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting ;” and all the pleasures were instantly turned into confusion and alarm. The company of the ungodly cannot do it. Herod had it, doubtless, to the very fulness of its enjoyment ; and yet, in the midst of it all, fears and terrors shook him, and made him tremble at the thought of John’s appearance, even though he had caused him to be beheaded.

What is it that can calm the terrors of the heart, and make it quiet and at rest ?

Let the *believer* tell us; he can speak from experience. What was it that set your heart at rest, when sin raised an alarm, when the law cried out for vengeance, and when hell seemed ready to devour? Was it not "*the blood of sprinkling?*" Yes, it fell, as it were, from the dying Saviour's wounds upon you; and, like oil on the troubled waters, it calmed and pacified the conscience. You are not like Herod, with these terrors before you in imagination; but like that poor trembling man who inquired, "What shall I do to be saved?" and had his fears quieted by those words, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Oh, let me invite all to come to the peace-giving Saviour. "He hath made peace by the blood of the cross." Fatal error to go elsewhere! When Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and I give will you *rest*," He intended rest of conscience, as well as all other rest, or refreshment. And by saying, "Come unto

me," he intimated the impossibility of obtaining it elsewhere. Do any think I press this matter too far? Ah, is it necessary then to commit murder, in order to need the pacifying efficacy of Jesus' blood? Does any one say, "*I am not a Herod; I need not fear; conscience does not accuse me?*" Notwithstanding all this self-complacency, you *are* accused; and in the sight of heaven you stand arraigned of many sins, yea, sins innumerable. How will you clear yourself of even blood-guiltiness, when charged with "crucifying the Son of God," (a greater than John the Baptist,) and "putting Him to an open shame?" Will you say that it is not chargeable on you, because you could have had no part in it; that you neither platted the thorns, nor pointed the spear, nor drove the nails into the sacred hands and feet of Christ? You are still an accused man; and if conscience does not feel it, the case is only made worse. The truth is, your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head," and they have slain the

Lord of glory. Let me suggest, for the awakening of conscience in time, one consideration to you : it is founded on my own ministerial experience. I have known conscience to sleep on, till awakened by the approach of death ; and then the terrors came ; then the sins of past life began to stalk, like spirits, before the imagination ; and the sight of them extorted many a bitter cry of apprehension, like Herod's, when he said, " This is John the Baptist ! " Conceive such an one on the dying bed, and looking, as it were, on the unpardoned transgressions of past life, as they move along in shadowy procession. " There is a sin passing now before me, which I might have had cancelled and blotted out by the blood of atonement, but I did not ! There go, in sad review, the *Sabbaths* which I broke, and the *sermons* which I turned away from, and the *ministers* who would have saved my soul alive ! Alas ! I have rejected my own mercies ; and now what must I do ? Thou, O Lord, hast set my secret sins in the light of thy countenance ;

Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth—oh, whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”

Why have I drawn this picture? To bring any of my dear hearers, who may have been in fatal error, to the “blood of sprinkling;” that their sins may *now* be brought forth, and made to pass in review, and have the mark of that blood put on them,—even the blood of Christ, which testifies of pardon and peace, and which “cleanseth from all sin.”

“2ndly. Let us notice the *circumstances* which led to these terrors. Here we are introduced to two other characters; the principal one is Herodias, the wife of Philip, who was Herod’s brother. Herod married her; and John had said, “It is not lawful.” This faithful testimony was not forgotten by Herodias: “she had a quarrel, or an inward grudge, against him; and would have killed him.” Such was her determination to take the utmost revenge, that though she had already procured his

imprisonment, that was not enough; he might come forth again, and tell her of her sin; therefore she tried to kill him. What a fearful state of mind was this! What a "whited sepulchre" was here! Fair to behold, but within "full of uncleanness!" As you look on it, you see it to be detestable. But do not detest the bloody deed only of which Herodias was guilty. Look at the cause which led to it. Did you ever dislike a faithful minister of the gospel for pointing out your sins? Did you ever "have a quarrel against him" for rebuking you? If so, you have partaken of this vile character. You have not indeed sought his life; but you have said in your heart, "I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Many ministers have known this feeling of anger, and "quarrelling" with pastoral faithfulness, to show itself by resenting the pointed application of a sermon. Such a person has said, "The minister not only preaches against *sin*, but against *my sin*;" he not only says, "*All*

have sinned,"—I could bear that ; but he contrives to bring something home to *me* ; so that it is as if he had been told of my faults, and aimed his rebukes personally at me, in consequence." Ah, my dear brethren, it is not so. It is not the *minister* that *contrives*, but the SPIRIT that *convicts*. Many thought, perhaps, in the battle of Ramoth Gilead, that the man who killed Ahab was a skilful archer ; but it was God's purpose, not the man's aim : "A certain man drew his bow *at a venture*." So does the minister with regard to sin, and God the Holy Ghost directs the shaft.

But suppose it should be a *personal* rebuke that gives you offence. If it be given in a spirit of meekness, fidelity, and love, it is "a word in season ;" and "how good is it !" Why should it be resented ? Among the happy recollections in the heavenly world, and the mutual congratulations of ministers and friends, I can conceive this to be one,—the thankful acknowledgment of ministerial and friendly *reproof*, which was blessed by the Spirit of

God. "Happy day for me," many an one will say, "when you, dear minister and friend, told me of the error of my way! It was smiting friendly; it was a 'precious balm.' Had it not been for that, I should not now be here, mingling my praises with yours before the throne."

The opportunity which Herodias sought for came at last. Herod's birthday was kept. Herodias sends her daughter, Salome, to dance before him and his nobles. What her power of pleasing must have been, we learn from the promise made her by the wicked and foolish Herod: "Whosoever thou shalt ask, I will give it thee." She goes to her mother, to be instructed: "What shall I ask? The half of the kingdom may be mine. Any riches, honours, and pleasures, that I choose." Riches and honours would, no doubt, have been acceptable to Herodias, though she had so much already:—for we know too well that the possession does not diminish the love of them—but no: there was a passion still stronger which must now be gratified, and

that was *revenge*: "Ask not," she says, "the half of the kingdom, nor anything in the way of wealth or honour that Herod offers. There lies in yonder dungeon a man whom my soul abhors. He has been the hateful reprover of my most cherished enjoyments. I shall be more gratified with the assurance of his death, however violent and bloody, than with half of Herod's kingdom. Go instantly, and ask for the head of John the Baptist." Here, then, is a mother, not only setting an infamous example to her daughter, but tutoring her in wickedness. And see how soon it is learnt. The daughter does not shrink with horror; she even goes further than her mother, in making the horrible request. Herodias had said, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist:"—that is, "ask that he may be put to death." But she says, "Give it me here directly *in a charger*; so that I may carry it to my mother, and assure her that her reprover is no more."

Herodias's daughter was probably a

highly accomplished female in her day. I can suppose the utmost attention to have been paid to such parts of her education as that with which she pleased Herod. But look at her heart! How full of wickedness! one moment how captivating! The next moment how hateful! She can carry the head of the murdered Baptist in a charger to her mother. The feelings callous, the heart hard, the soul unrenewed! *Parents!* horrible as this case is, do not refuse to learn a lesson from it. Beware how you sacrifice to what are called accomplishments in education, the best interests of your children. We do not wish you to debar them from such knowledge and acquirements as become their station in life,—very far from it; but take care, we beseech you, lest you should thrust out the grand concerns of the soul, while anxious for their education. Guard them, by every prayerful effort, against hardness of heart, worldliness of mind, ignorance of the Saviour, and neglect of salvation. Suffer your children to come to Christ. Bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is not without reason that I press this point. I have seen many young females on their death-beds; and I have heard some of their bitter lamentations "Sir, I was educated only to please the gay circle in which I moved; I was not taught to think of another world." So said a young and accomplished person once to me, when I was inquiring how the great matter stood between God and her soul. The world was vanishing rapidly from her sight. Eternity was opening to her view. What had her education done for her? It had given her no knowledge of Christ, made no provision for a dying hour, nor taught her those divine truths which alone could save her soul.

Before we conclude, we must pass from Herod's palace to John's dungeon. While the mirth of the feast is at its height, an executioner, at the king's command, goes to the prison, and takes off the Baptist's head. Where *that* is to be carried we have already seen. But was this *all* the

transaction? No; the spirit of the holy man escapes from prison, flies to God, and is for ever at rest. No matter how, or by what means, a believer dies! If, like Stephen, amidst the noise of stones, as they are crushing his body, he “falls asleep” in Jesus; and if, like John, in the silent dungeon, laying his head on a block, he is welcome to glory; the same Jesus stands ready to receive them both. “Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

But now the head is brought in the charger.—Conceive the scene! They look on it. Salome sees it first. Her pleasing Herod had procured the death of the saint. How does she look on that head which she had so eagerly asked for? Perhaps, intent only on having obeyed her wicked mother, or vain of what her accomplishments had done, she viewed it with little or no concern. How does Herodias look on it? Her revenge is now complete; she triumphs over her adversary; now she may revel in sin undisturbed, till *her* head

shall lie low in the grave, and her soul depart to judgment; and then,—“ I will recompense,” saith the Lord. How does Herod look on it? Perhaps he gazes with remorse on the poor pale cheeks, and the eyes now closed, and the lips now silent in death. Those lips will never warn him more. He soon turns away with fear; and trembles to think of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” But how, suppose ye, did *angels* look on it? “Are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation?” Yes: and while that head was being struck from the body, they waited to carry his soul into Abraham’s bosom. How did the *God* of angels look on it? With a smile of heavenly approval, and with words of joyful welcome: “Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

Thus, while there was this accursed celebration of Herod’s birth-day in his palace, amidst the mirth of the ungodly, and the scoffs of the profane; the holy Bap-

tist may be said to have had his birth-day celebrated too,—his day of admission into a life of eternal glory, celebrated by angels and archangels, and by all the company of heaven.

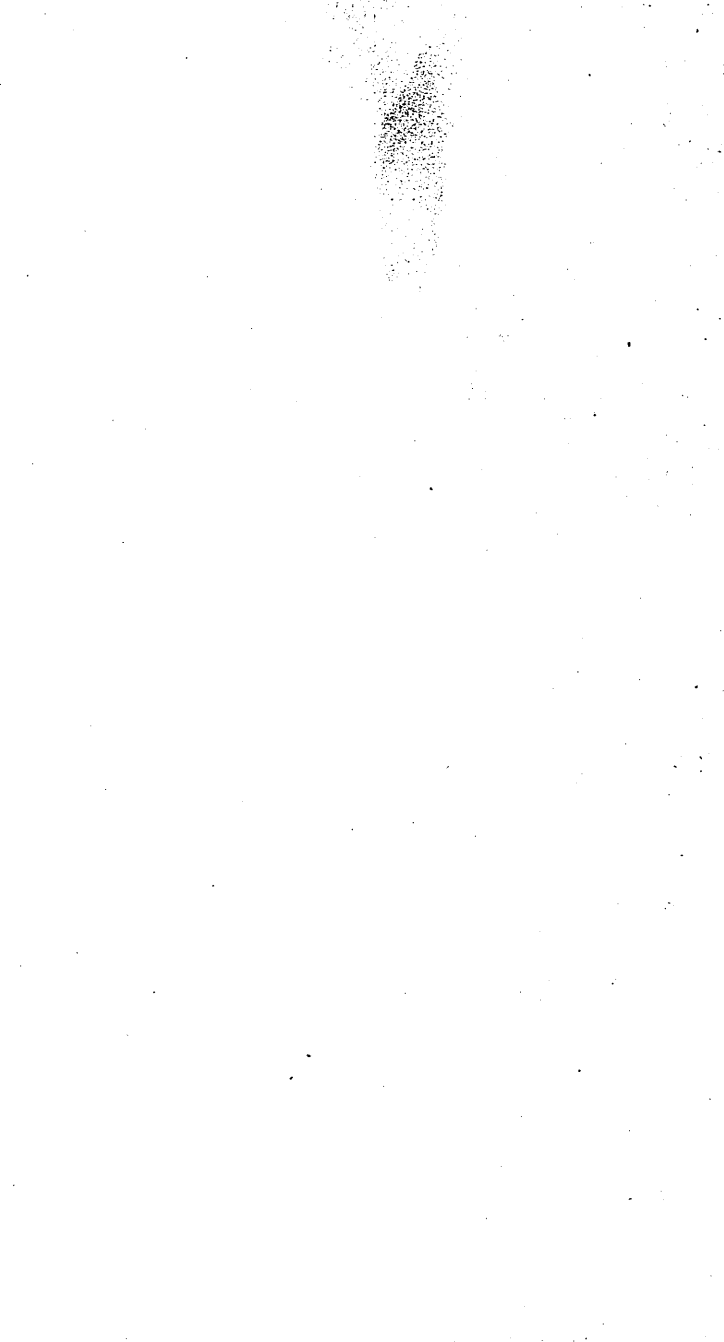
I will make but two brief remarks, and then close.

1st. How humiliating it is, and yet how salutary, to see that nothing more than the natural corruption of an *unrenewed heart* occasioned all the wickedness of this transaction! It was thus in Herodias, in Salome, and in Herod. What says our blessed Lord? “Out of the *heart* proceed,”—and then he gives a fearful catalogue of sins. Read it for yourselves in Matthew xv. 19, and be humbled in the dust of self-abasement.

2nd. How encouraging it is to see what a power there is in the *grace* of God, when it becomes the ruling principle in the heart! It was *that* which enabled the Baptist to rebuke sin, and then to bear the malignity of Herodias, and the persecution of Herod. It was *that* which enabled

him to endure the sufferings of the dungeon, and then the pains of death,—the violent cruel death, which followed. Had not the love of Christ, and the holy desire to save the souls of his enemies, constrained him, he might have escaped all this accumulated misery. Let us ask—what do *we* possess of this love of Christ,—this constraining principle? What do we possess of this desire to do good, spiritual good, to others? Let us examine ourselves as to these points. In the mean time, let it be our fervent prayer to God, “that He would make us so to follow the holy life and doctrine of his servant, John the Baptist; that we may truly repent, according to his preaching; and constantly speak the truth, and boldly rebuke sin, and patiently suffer for the truth’s sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE END.



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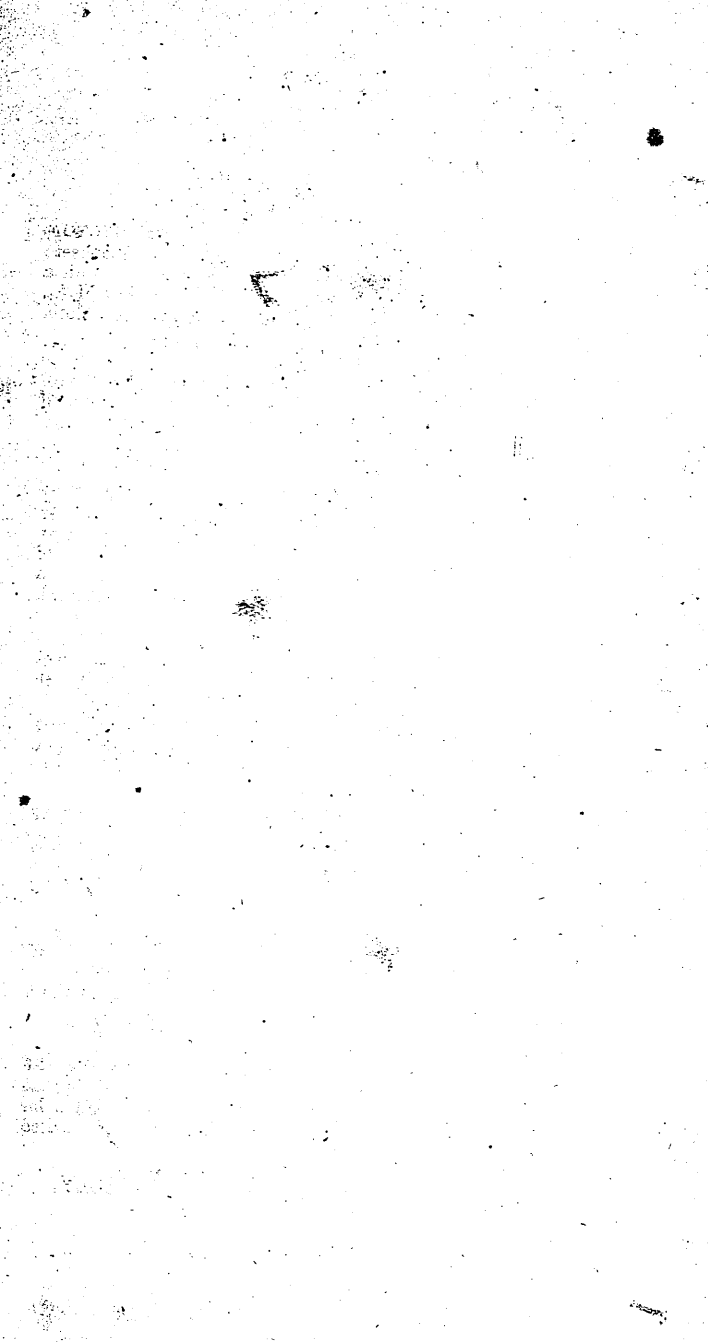
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